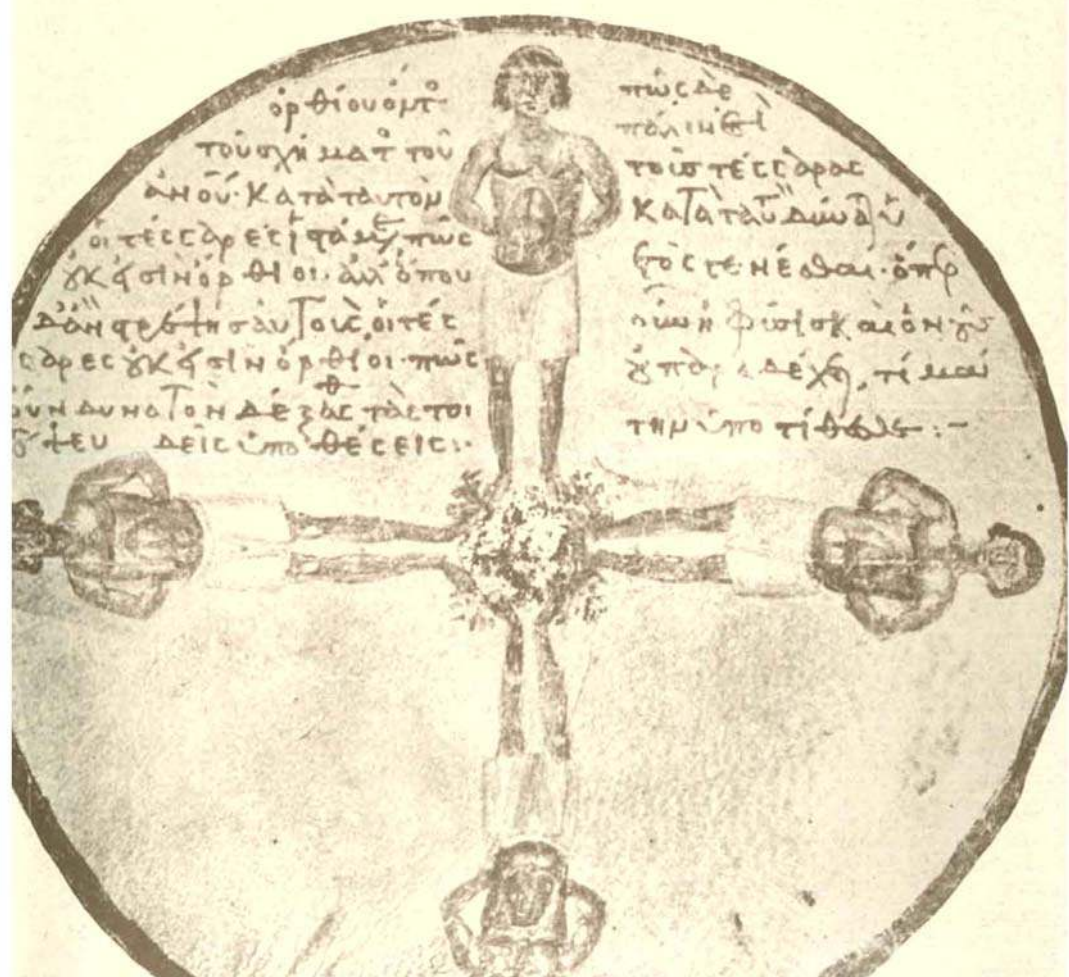


GENESIOS

ON THE REIGNS OF THE EMPERORS



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Εἰ δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀντιπόδων ἐπεξεργαστικώτερον θελήσειέ τις ζητῆσαι, ῥαδίως τοῦς γραῶδεις μύθους αὐτῶν ἀνακαλύψει.

Cosmas Indicopleustes, I,20.

GENESIOS

ON THE REIGNS OF THE EMPERORS

Byzantina Australiensia 11

GENESIOS ON THE REIGNS OF THE EMPERORS

Translation and Commentary

Anthony Kaldellis

Australian Association for Byzantine Studies

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I dedicate this work to my parents, knowing that I can never fully thank them for all that they have done for me.

Introduction

The historical work bearing the title *On the Reigns* (*Βασιλείαι*) survives in a single manuscript of the eleventh century. A fourteenth-century hand has added the presumed author's name ("Genesios") in the margin.¹ With the possible exception of John Skylitzes, whose testimony will be considered below, no Byzantine writer discusses this text or its author. Therefore, the date of its composition and the precise identity of its author must be determined largely through internal criteria. The first two sections of this introduction are devoted to these two closely related problems, and are followed by discussions of Genesios' use of sources and his value as a historian.

1. Date and Circumstances of Composition

The preface and dedicatory poem of the text clearly indicate that the work as we have it was dedicated to the *autokrator* Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos and therefore, according to scholarly consensus, it must have been written during the period of that Emperor's independent rule (945-959). This conclusion, however, is unwarranted, for the preface can be used to date only itself and there is evidence that most of the text was written considerably earlier.

Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, the son of Leo VI ('The Wise,' ruled 886-912), was born in 905 and crowned as early as 908.² When his uncle Alexander died in 913 after a year-long reign, the management of the Empire was entrusted to a series of unstable regencies, and then passed into the hands of a self-made admiral, Romanos Lekapenos, who raised himself to the throne and ruled as Constantine's co-Emperor for twenty-four years (920-944). During that time Romanos was in effective control of the State, depriving his younger colleague of all real power. Constantine VII finally came into his inheritance when Romanos was

¹ For extensive discussions of the manuscript, see H. Wäschke, 'Genesios,' pp. 256-263, and the introduction to the *CFHB* edition of the text by A. Lesmüller-Werner and I. Thurn, pp. ix, xxii-xxvi.

² P. Grierson and R. Jenkins, 'The Date of Constantine VII's Coronation.'

deposed by his own sons, who were in turn deposed and exiled by the supporters of the legitimate dynasty one month later.³

Constantine supervised the composition of many treatises on ceremonial, diplomatic, and administrative matters, and commissioned a series of Imperial biographies known as Theophanes Continuatus.⁴ The first part of this work covers the years 813-867, thus deliberately continuing the *Chronographia* of Theophanes the Confessor. Its author remains anonymous, though he probably worked under the direct supervision of Constantine himself. The second part, known as the *Vita Basilii*, is a biography of Basil I (ruled 867-886), who founded the so-called Macedonian dynasty. Constantine was personally involved in its composition.⁵ Both parts of the text denigrate Basil's predecessors and present him as the savior of the Empire. Theophanes Continuatus clearly constitutes historical propaganda in favor of the Macedonian dynasty.⁶

Genesios (we may use that name for the sake of convenience) has also been cast as a spokesman for the propaganda created at the court of Constantine VII. His hostile treatment of Basil's predecessors reveals biases similar to those of Theophanes Continuatus, although the latter emphasizes the negative features of those Emperors more strongly.⁷ There are also many verbal similarities between the two texts, yet the work of Genesios is much shorter and less well written than the official product of Constantine's patronage. It is therefore important to understand the precise relationship between the two works. Did one borrow from the other, did they use the same sources, or both?

A crucial piece of evidence comes from Genesios himself, who claims, in his preface, that he was the first to write a narrative of events after 813. According to F. Hirsch, the first scholar to investigate this problem, Genesios was the earlier writer and was thus used as a source

³ For Romanos I in general, see S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign*.

⁴ For Constantine's works in general, see A. Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World*, part V, and the useful and corrective perspective of I. Ševčenko, 'Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus.'

⁵ See, in general, H. G. Nickels, 'The *Continuatio Theophanis*'; and R. Jenkins, 'The Classical Background of the *Scriptores Post Theophanem*.' The final section of Theophanes Continuatus (covering the years 886-961) is of no relevance to the problems that surround Genesios.

⁶ For a detailed analysis which reveals the essentially panegyric nature of the *Vita Basilii*, see P. A. Agapetos, 'Η εικόνα τοῦ αὐτοκράτορα Βασιλείου Α' στή φιλομακεδονική γραμματεία 867-959.'

⁷ Cf. F. H. Tinnefeld, *Kategorien der Kaiserkritik in der byzantinischen Historiographie*, pp. 88, 91.

by Theophanes Continuatus.⁸ John Bury later modified Hirsch's position, by arguing that Theophanes Continuatus used not only Genesios, but also Genesios' sources, since there is clearly relevant information in Theophanes Continuatus that is not contained in Genesios. He dated the latter to 944-948 and the former to 949-950.⁹ It was left to the Belgian scholar Henri Grégoire to take the final logical step and suggest that either Genesios and Theophanes Continuatus made independent use of the same sources or Genesios used and summarized Theophanes Continuatus.¹⁰ Recent scholarship has preferred Grégoire's first alternative,¹¹ which is consistent with the boastful but credible claim to priority made in Genesios' preface.

Yet there are some indications that Genesios' work, which covers the years 813-886 in four books,¹² was composed in two separate stages. A cursory glance at its contents reveals a curious anomaly. Each of the first three books treats the reign of a single Emperor (Book 1: Leo V, 813-820; Book 2: Michael II, 820-829; Book 3: Theophilos, 829-842). Each begins by dating the Emperor's accession and ends by calculating the length of his reign and noting the manner of his death. Book 4, however, which is more than twice as long as any of the others, begins by dating the accession of Michael III (842), but after the murder of the Caesar Bardas (in 866) it slips into a summary and highly selective account of the rise and reign of Basil I. It then ends by noting the duration of Basil's rule and the manner of his death. It is curious that Basil, the only Emperor consistently praised in the work, is accorded less space than his disparaged predecessor Michael III.

⁸ *Byzantinische Studien*, c. 4, esp. p. 182 ff. This conclusion was accepted by K. Krumbacher (*Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur*, pp. 253, 348).

⁹ ERE, pp. 460-461; also 'The Treatise De Administrando Imperio,' pp. 550, 571-572.

¹⁰ 'Michel III et Basil le Macédonien dans les inscriptions d'Ancyre,' p. 346; 'Le tombeau et la date de Digénis Akritas,' p. 495; 'Autour de Digénis Akritas,' pp. 289-290; 'Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' p. 185, n. 1.

¹¹ E.g., F. Barišić, 'Génésios et le Continuateur de Théophane,' who suggests that Constantine VII commissioned Theophanes Continuatus after rejecting Genesios' poorly written work; and P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III.' J. N. Ljubarskij ('Theophanes Continuatus und Genesios. Das Problem einer gemeinsamen Quelle') argues that the two authors independently used the same source, to which Theophanes Continuatus remained more faithful than Genesios. H. Hunger's *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* adds nothing new to the study of Genesios.

¹² In the introduction to her German translation (*Byzanz am Vorabend neuer Grösse*, p. 15), A. Lesmüller-Werner suggests that this arrangement was designed to mirror the four books of Kings in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, which bear the same title as Genesios' text.

To resolve this anomaly Karl Krumbacher proposed that the work originally ended in 867, and that the account of Basil's reign was a later addition which complemented the dedication to Constantine VII.¹³ A. Kazhdan argued plausibly that Genesios' account of Basil was in fact culled from the *Vita Basilii*.¹⁴ If these conclusions are correct, then the first part of Genesios' work, covering the years 813-867, was written before the corresponding section of Theophanes Continuatus, while his account of the reign of Basil was written after the *Vita Basilii*.

Yet an important piece of evidence that can help us date Genesios' text has been overlooked in this debate. At the end of section 2.10 of *On the Reigns*, Genesios lists the Arab rulers of Crete from its capture during the reign of Michael II down to his own time. The son of the conqueror Apochaps, Genesios tells us, was Saipes, whose son in turn was Babdel, who was defeated in the Peloponnese in the time of the Emperor Leo VI (i.e., before 912). Babdel's brother (or cousin) was Zerkounes, who also "ruled Crete and was succeeded by the current ruler." The significance of this passage was noted by Hirsch,¹⁵ who, however, failed to grasp its implications for the chronology of the text since the study of the emirs of Crete had not yet begun in his time.

Today the student of Genesios can benefit from the work of George Miles, who has examined the surviving coins of the Arab rulers of Crete. Although his initial reconstruction of their chronology was overconfident and inconsistent (as he later admitted),¹⁶ one relatively safe conclusion emerges from his synthesis: the successor of "Zerkounes" could not have ruled as late as 945-959, the period implied by the dedication and presumed agenda of our text. A closer look at the available evidence may enable us to determine when section 2.10 of *On the Reigns* was written.

Genesios' Apochaps is clearly Abū Ḥaṣṣ, the Spanish-Arabic conqueror of the island. The Arabic historian al-Ṭabari (1417) claims that he still ruled Crete in 852/3. Apochaps' son Saipes is clearly Abū Ḥaṣṣ' son Shu'ayb,¹⁷ whose latest extant coin is dated to 894/5. The names

¹³ *Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur*, p. 264.

¹⁴ See the discussion by the editors A. Lesmüller-Werner and I. Thurn (p. xii), who accept Kazhdan's conclusion, and cite supporting literature.

¹⁵ *Byzantinische Studien*, p. 123.

¹⁶ Cf. 'A Provisional Reconstruction of the Genealogy of the Arab Amirs of Crete,' and 'Byzantium and the Arabs: Relations in Crete and the Aegean Area,' with corrections in the fuller *The Coinage of the Arab Amirs of Crete*, pp. 1-7; see also the list of rulers in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 3, p. 1085 (under 'Ikrīsh,' the Arabic name for Crete). Most of the information that follows derives from the work of Miles.

¹⁷ Called Saet (Σαήτ) by Theophanes Continuatus (299) and Skylitzes (152).

Babdel and Zerkounes have no Arabic equivalent attested either in the Arabic sources or on any of the coins (although Babdel could easily be Abū-ʿAbdullāh). But this fact does not cast doubt on Genesios' account, for Byzantine versions of Arabic names are not always exact. For instance, the last emir of Crete was named ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Shuʿayb, yet Byzantine authors called him Kouroupes.¹⁸ We can probably acquit Genesios of the charge of ignorance concerning the Arab rulers. He lists all the emirs of Crete known to the Byzantines (except for the last one, who ruled after Genesios' time) and his is the only Greek source to list them all.¹⁹ He appears to have known how they were related to each other and recounts the fall of Babdel in some detail (he was shipwrecked on the Peloponnese, defeated by the local Strategos, whose name and surname Genesios records). Genesios is our only source of knowledge for this expedition.²⁰ The genealogy of the emirs of Crete is presented in a digression from the main narrative and appears to be Genesios' contemporary testimony. Unlike so much else in his text, there is nothing fanciful or prejudicial in the few lines he devotes to them.

By his own account, then, Genesios wrote at least part of his history while the successor of Zerkounes ruled in Crete. The date is unfortunately impossible to determine with any certainty. However, given the number of emirs that must be assigned to the period between Shuʿayb, who died between 895 and 912, and ʿAli b. Aḥmad (attested in 948), the probable predecessor of Kouroupes, it is highly unlikely that the successor of Zerkounes could have ruled as late as 945.

In other words, Genesios may have written section 2.10 as early as c. 915 and as late as c. 930. Greater precision will be possible only when we know more about the chronology of the Arab emirs of Crete. But the assignment of at least part of the text of *On the Reigns* to an earlier date solves more problems than it creates. We may hypothesize that the first version of the work covered the years 813-867 in four books (one per Emperor), and that it was written slightly before or during the reign of Romanos Lekapenos. After the fall of Romanos, Genesios carried his work down to 886 by drawing upon the *Vita Basilii*, which was composed c. 950. Having thereby endorsed Constantine VII's view of history, he

¹⁸ E.g., Skylitzes 249.

¹⁹ See I. Papadopoulos, *Ἡ Κρήνη ὑπὸ τοὺς Σαρακηνοὺς*, p. 96 f. This scholar also noted the chronological implications of Genesios' statement but stuck to the traditional dating of 945-950.

²⁰ Cf. A. Bon, *Le Péloponnèse Byzantin*, pp. 77, 187. Babdel's expedition is not mentioned by V. Christides, 'The Raids of the Moslems of Crete in the Aegean Sea, Piracy and Conquest.'

dedicated the new version of his work to that Emperor.²¹ Consequently, the author of the first section of Theophanes Continuatus could still have consulted the first (and shorter) version of Genesios' text. This solution explains the anomaly in the format of the work and the apparent reliance on the *Vita Basilii*, while preserving the chronological priority of the first version of *On the Reigns* to the first section of Theophanes Continuatus.²²

A possible objection to the proposed chronology arises from the statement made in both the dedication and the preface that it was the *autokrator* Constantine VII who asked Genesios to compose a history of events beginning with the reign of Leo V. This claim contradicts the notion that the first part of the work was written during the reign of Romanos Lekapenos. Yet Genesios may have been trying to flatter Constantine by attributing to him the inspiration for a work that he had really written much earlier and on his own initiative. In fact, many texts were ascribed to the hand of Constantine VII, or at least to his inspiration and guidance.²³ And in his preface, Genesios implies that he is expecting some kind of reward for writing the history -- sufficient grounds for such flattery. Otherwise, in 950 Constantine may have encouraged Genesios to bring his earlier work down to 886, perhaps suggesting that he use the account given in the *Vita Basilii*. Genesios then seized the opportunity to claim that the *whole* history had been written at the Emperor's request. A third possibility is that Constantine may in fact have asked Genesios long before 945 to write a history beginning with the reign of Leo V. Constantine was twenty years old in 925, a date within the possible time-span for the composition of the first version of Genesios' work. This solution would require some modifications to our current understanding of the origins of Macedonian historical propaganda. An entirely different original dedication, including Constantine VII and the Lekapenoi, is conceivable.²⁴

²¹ For the date of the *Vita*, see I. Ševčenko, 'Storia letteraria,' p. 97. H. Grégoire suggested that the dedication attached now to the work of Genesios may not have been that of the original version ('Le tombeau et la date de Digénis Akritas,' p. 495).

²² Arguments in favor of that priority are offered by F. Barišić, 'Génésios et le Continuateur de Théophane,' pp. 119-120. I. Ševčenko has argued that the first section of Theophanes Continuatus may have been written after the *Vita Basilii* ('Storia letteraria,' p. 98 ff.), and possibly, therefore, even after Genesios' history received its final form.

²³ See I. Ševčenko, 'Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus,' for an analysis -- and an example -- of that practice.

²⁴ If the first version of the text was written during the reign of Romanos Lekapenos, it would probably not have championed the cause of the dynasty which he set out to displace. Interestingly, we find that without the later addition of the reign of Basil to Book 4, the pro-Macedonian slant of the work greatly diminishes. Michael III is vilified far less

2. Author

We may now turn to the question of the authorship of these Imperial *res gestae*. As we have seen, a fourteenth-century hand has added the name “Genesios” in the margin of the eleventh-century manuscript. Though we do not know the grounds for this identification, it may not be as conjectural as most scholars believe.

First we must note the promising but ultimately inconclusive remarks of the eleventh-century historian John Skylitzes. In the preface to his *Synopsis Historiarum*, he compares the work of many of his predecessors to that of Theophanes the Confessor. Concluding that none of them matched his brilliance, he proceeds to list their faults and names.

They did not reflect properly on their subject matter and harmed rather than benefited their readers. Theodore Daphnopates, Niketas Paphlagon, Joseph Genesios and Manuel the Byzantines... each set forth his own agenda, the one eulogizing an Emperor, the other reviling a Patriarch, and another sounding the praises of a friend.

Skylitzes thus testifies to the existence of a Constantinopolitan historian named Joseph Genesios. Furthermore, many passages of Skylitzes’ text were lifted almost verbatim from the text of *On the Reigns*.²⁵ Yet it is not necessary to link that text with the historian Joseph Genesios mentioned in Skylitzes’ preface.

The modern debate on the identity of “Genesios” began with Hirsch, who brought attention to a passage from various versions of the chronicle of Symeon the Logothetes, according to which Constantine the Armenian was the father of a Patrikios Thomas and of a Genesios. Since Constantine the Armenian receives an especially favorable treatment in the work of our author (see below), Hirsch concluded that the latter was Genesios the son of Constantine the Armenian.²⁶

This conclusion was rightly questioned by C. de Boor, who argued that the implied chronology was impossible. Our author was alive c. 950,

before Basil enters the picture (cf. 4.4, 4.7, and see B. Blysidou, ‘Οι Αποκλίσεις Γενεσίου και Συνέχειας Θεοφάνη για τη Βασιλεία του Μιχαήλ Γ’,’ p. 101), while Leo V and Theophilos had to be attacked in any case for being iconoclasts.

²⁵ Compare, for instance, Skylitzes 17-18 and Genesios 1.15-16.

²⁶ *Byzantinische Studien*, pp. 118-121.

but Constantine the Armenian was active under Theophilos (829-842) and Michael III (843-867). De Boor drew attention to a different version of the text, which stated that Constantine the Armenian was the father of a Patrikios and Logothetes of the Dromos Thomas and the *grandfather* of a Patrikios and Kanikleios Genesios.²⁷

Yet, with the exception of a possibly arbitrary notation in the margins of the manuscript, there is still no solid link between our text and any Genesios, whether the son or grandson of Constantine the Armenian. Therefore, many scholars prefer to regard its author as anonymous.²⁸ Though skepticism is warranted, there are nevertheless good reasons to believe that the author of *On the Reigns* was a descendant of Constantine the Armenian named Genesios.

P. Karlin-Hayter has examined the evidence for Constantine found in "Genesios" and Theophanes Continuatus. She concludes that the two authors independently utilized a now-lost common source, which, in turn, was based on a biography of Constantine.²⁹ Yet it is difficult to believe that there ever was a biography of Constantine. Let us take a close look at all the actions attributed to him in Genesios and Theophanes Continuatus (Th.C.), which together contain virtually all the information we possess about him.

(1) The Empress Theodora sent Constantine to the iconoclastic Patriarch John VII ('the Grammarian') to inform him that the Orthodox desired to restore the icons (Th.C. 150). (2) John later complained that Constantine had tortured him during that meeting, which, incidentally, had failed to persuade him to do anything. Constantine was later cleared of the accusation (Genesios 4.3). (3) The Logothetes Theoktistos begged Constantine to protect him from the men Michael III had sent to kill him. Constantine tried but failed (Genesios 4.10). (4) Constantine expressed his disapproval of the election of Photios to the Patriarchate. Photios was elected anyway (Genesios 4.18). (5) He provided nourishment and comfort to the deposed Patriarch Ignatios when the latter was being tortured. Again his actions did not in the least alter the course of events (Genesios 4.18; Th.C. 194). (6) Constantine participated in Michael III's private chariot races (Genesios 4.19; Th.C. 198; this incident is also recorded in nearly all the versions of the Logothetes chronicle). (7) He

²⁷ C. de Boor, 'Zu Genesios.' His conclusions were accepted by J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 460. Some of the problems of Hirsch's theory had already been pointed out by H. Wäschke, 'Genesios,' pp. 268-273.

²⁸ They are listed by the editors A. Lesmüller-Werner and I. Thurn, pp. x-xi.

²⁹ 'Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III,' pp. 484-492.

protected Michael III from the murderers of Bardas (Genesios 4.23). (8) He calmed the tempers of the various factions in the army camp after the murder of Bardas (Genesios 4.23; Th.C. 206).³⁰ (9) When the future Emperor Basil was in a wrestling match, Constantine came to his assistance by sprinkling straw on the ground. This incident is recorded in both sources, but whereas Genesios (4.26) claims that Constantine was a relative of Basil, the *Vita Basilii* (229-230) merely claims that he was a fellow Armenian.

Karlin-Hayter is probably right that (6) derived from a political pamphlet deriding Michael III. In any case, its attestation in the different historical tradition represented by the chronicle of the Logothetes suggests that our knowledge of it did not originate exclusively in the lost *Vita* of Constantine, if such a text ever existed.

Most of the other actions attributed to Constantine are so inconsequential that it is hard to believe one could construct a biography from them. The subjects of Byzantine biographies always performed actions in their lifetime (or afterwards) that merited praise and commanded the attention of posterity, e.g., victory in battles, miracles, prominent participation in a religious struggle, martyrdom, etc. There is none of this in what we know of Constantine's life. He appears to have been singularly unable to change the course of events.³¹ Therefore, rather than assume that a full biography lay behind these unspectacular testimonia, we may consider the possibility that a historian of broader political events, namely "Genesios," introduced him unnecessarily into the narrative, exaggerated his historical importance and presented him as a champion of the 'right' side in various conflicts, even if that occasionally meant inventing a role for him. A particularly striking example is (7), which describes the murder of Bardas:

The treacherous attack took place suddenly and the shocked Emperor accidentally collapsed upon the body. But the Droungarios of the Vigla, whose name was Constantine, intervened to save the Emperor and make sure that he was not murdered as well. For he was a loyal protector of the Emperor and showed that in his solicitude for him he was willing to accept even mortal dangers. And perhaps both men would have been killed, had Constantine himself not aided and strengthened the Emperor, pulling him away from the killers with auspicious words and his very own hands, as he was fortified by his nobility of mind and bravery.

³⁰ Karlin-Hayter conflates (7) and (8). Theophanes Continuatus does not record (7).

³¹ Noted by Karlin-Hayter, op. cit. p. 492.

But no one had planned to kill Michael in the first place! The claim that he accidentally fell upon Bardas' body is a pathetic attempt to make Constantine's alleged intervention somehow conducive to the Emperor's safety, and thus indicate his loyalty and bravery.

Genesios praises Constantine in a singular way, and also gives him an active role in the religious disputes of the ninth century, which he presents in a highly partisan manner. Genesios hated the iconoclasts, as was only proper for a man of his age, and also perpetuated the anti-Photian and pro-Ignatian propaganda of Niketas David Paphlagon. Not surprisingly, he contrived to confer the 'right' partisan credentials upon his hero. According to (2), Constantine was unjustly accused by John the Grammarian, who thus "unwillingly bestowed genuine praise upon the man he had accused." Genesios emphasizes the point lest we miss its significance. He desperately wants us to know that Constantine was an enemy of the iconoclasts. According to (4), Constantine opposed the election of Photios. But who save his anti-Photian descendants would have cared to preserve the memory of his utterly ineffectual opposition? Photios was duly enthroned as Patriarch, and Constantine contributed nothing to the ensuing struggles within the Church. The torture of Ignatios, which forms the backdrop to (5), was copied by Genesios from the *Vita Ignatii* of Niketas David Paphlagon (col. 520-1). But the solicitude of Constantine for Ignatios was a new element of the story, introduced by our author, in order to emphasize once again that his hero supported the right side in the conflict. Genesios even gives us a motive for his historical invention when he tells us that Constantine helped Ignatios in spite of the fact that he otherwise supported Bardas, the man directly responsible for Ignatios' ordeals! Genesios is obviously trying to clear Constantine's name.

Constantine seems to have played a marginal role in the disputes of the ninth century, and yet the author of our text goes to great lengths to present him as a champion of the factions he himself later supported and portrayed favorably in his work. Constantine had to be presented as anti-Photian and pro-Ignatian and cleared of imputations of iconoclasm, for he had, after all, been favored by Theophilos, the arch-iconoclastic Emperor of the ninth century. His support of Bardas had to be downplayed and he had to be acquitted of any participation in the murder of Theoktistos (3), which brought his patron Bardas to power. It is difficult to believe that anyone but a descendant would go to so much

trouble on behalf of a man whose memory was otherwise not controversial.

The text of Theophanes Continuatus, for example, is far more extensive than *On the Reigns*, yet it records far fewer incidents involving Constantine. This suggests that such incidents were not contained in whatever common sources the two historians used. According to the argument made above regarding the relative chronology of the two works, the first part of the continuation was written after the corresponding sections of Genesios' work. Therefore, if the continuator consulted Genesios, he chose to downplay Constantine's importance. His claim that Theodora sent Constantine to confront the iconoclastic Patriarch John VII (1) entirely avoids, but can be easily inferred from, Genesios' melodramatic account of John's subsequent accusations (2). After all, Constantine had held high office and it is unlikely that the historical record would have erased every trace of his career.³² An embassy to John, and the calming of the troops after the murder of Bardas (8), are perfectly plausible actions for a man of his station, though they fall short of earning him a biography.

Theophanes Continuatus also records Constantine's ministrations to the tortured Ignatios (5). He probably copied this incident from Genesios, but his decision to include it indicates that he may have had reasons of his own for preserving Constantine's good memory. According to Theophanes Continuatus (150, 198), Constantine's son Thomas became Logothetes of the Dromos, a position he held around 907, but also again during the minority of Constantine VII,³³ who later paid tribute to Thomas' culture and ability in the *Vita Basilii* (229).³⁴

This connection may explain the favorable inclusion of Constantine the Armenian in the *Vita Basilii* (229-230), which was written before the corresponding sections of Book 4 of Genesios. In that text Constantine VII depicts Constantine the Armenian as a friendly countryman of Basil, who helped the future Emperor during a wrestling match. Significantly, when Genesios re-wrote the same passage he made Constantine a close *relative*

³² For which see R. Guiland, 'Patrices des règnes de Theophile et de Michel III,' p. 603.

³³ See R. Guiland, 'Les Logothètes,' pp. 53-54; J. Darrouzès and L. G. Westerink, in the introduction to their edition of the *Letters* of Theodore Daphnopates, pp. 21-22, suggest as possible extremes of Thomas' life c. 860-950; for a summary of the evidence on Thomas see also A. Markopoulos, 'Quelques remarques sur la famille des Gènesioi aux IX^e-X^e siècles,' pp. 105-106.

³⁴ Thomas' learning is also praised by Theodore Daphnopates, *Letter* 21.

of Basil. Genesios, if indeed he was descended from Constantine, was claiming to be more than just a supporter of the Macedonian dynasty.³⁵

This review of the evidence indicates that the author of our text had a personal or family interest in depicting Constantine the Armenian favorably, and that he may indeed have been a descendant of his named Genesios. Leo Choïrosphaktes, a high official under Basil I and Leo VI, corresponded with a Genesios, who was Magistros and Patrikios. These letters are dated by their editor to 906, as is a letter by Thomas, the son of Constantine the Armenian, to Leo Choïrosphaktes.³⁶ Even if this Genesios could be connected with Constantine the Armenian (he might be the other son, the brother of Thomas), he is still too early to be our author. Now Thomas had a grandson, Romanos Genesios, who was active in the later part of the tenth century.³⁷ The father of Romanos Genesios, and thus presumably the son of Thomas, was also named Genesios.³⁸ A. Markopoulos believes that this Genesios (the son of Thomas and father of Romanos Genesios) was the follower of Symeon the New Theologian mentioned in that mystic's biography by Niketas Stethatos.³⁹ But according to Niketas, this Genesios was the spiritual son of Symeon in the last quarter of the tenth century, and campaigned for the rehabilitation of the Saint in 1010/11. Chronology dictates that, if this man is connected to the family of Thomas, then he is Romanos Genesios and not the son of Thomas named Genesios (Romanos Genesios' father).

We may thus conclude tentatively, along with the scholars already noted, that the most likely candidate for our author is the Kanikleios Genesios, son of Thomas, grandson of Constantine the Armenian, and father of Romanos Genesios.⁴⁰

³⁵ R. Jenkins accepts Genesios' version ('The Classical Background of the *Scriptores Post Theophanem*,' p. 27).

³⁶ G. Kolias, *Léon Choërosphactès*, pp. 91-93: correspondence with Genesios; p. 95: letter from Thomas; cf. A. Markopoulos, *op. cit.* p. 106.

³⁷ For whom see *ibid.* 106-107.

³⁸ See Demetrios Synkellos in *Jus Canonicum Graeco-Romanum* col. 1113.

³⁹ See sections 54-55, 102; A. Markopoulos, *op. cit.* p. 107.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the plausibility of this identification, see *ibid.* p. 108.

Constantine the Armenian

Thomas

Genesisios

Joseph Genesisios (author of *On the Reigns?*)

Romanos Genesisios

One more piece of evidence remains to be mentioned. According to the eleventh-century writer John Mauropous, the monk Dorotheos was descended from the noble family of the Genesisioi, which included a number of Patrikioi among its ancestors and hailed from Trebizond,⁴¹ a city on the fluid border between the Empire and Armenia.

3. Genesisios' Sources

Byzantine historiography has a unique and comforting sequential quality. The work of Prokopios, the historian of Justinian's wars, was continued by Agathias, who covered the years 552-559 and who was in turn succeeded by Menander Protector (down to 582). Menander was followed by Theophylaktos Simokattes, who wrote an account of the reign of Maurice (582-602), and he was continued, after a delay of two centuries, by the Patriarch Nikephoros. Nikephoros' contemporary Theophanes the Confessor completed a chronicle down to the year 813, and was in turn continued by the court historians of Constantine VII and by later authors such as John Skylitzes.

At first sight Genesisios appears to fit into this pattern. His work begins in 813, precisely when Theophanes' chronicle ends, and thus it is tempting to see him as the first extant continuator of Theophanes.⁴² This

⁴¹ *Life of Dorotheos*, p. 210 (P. de Legarde ed.).

⁴² A. Lesmüller-Werner describes him as a writer who "explicitly" continued the work of Theophanes: see the introduction to her German translation, *Byzanz am Vorabend neuer Grösse*, p. 12.

interpretation, however, should be resisted since there is evidence that Genesios had not read Theophanes, or at least that he did not consult him when composing his own work. In section 1.4 he claims that Leo V entered the City by the Golden Gate, but Theophanes, a contemporary witness, claims that he used the Charisian Gate (502). At the end of section 2.2 Genesios claims that the Egyptian Kallinikos brought the weapon known as 'Greek Fire' to the Byzantines during the siege of Constantinople by Thomas the Slav in 821-822. According to Theophanes (354), however, this occurred in 672/3, when the Arabs were besieging Constantinople.⁴³ In section 2.3 Genesios describes a comet which he interprets as a sign of the iconoclast revival under Leo V and the revolt of Thomas the Slav. The description of this comet first occurs in Theophanes (499), but there it is treated as a sign of the fall of Mesembria to the Bulgarians. Genesios' version of the event is in fact taken from George the Monk (777-778), who wrote in the third quarter of the ninth century and made careless use of Theophanes.⁴⁴ Numerous verbal similarities establish that Genesios used George, but there are no such correspondences between his text and that of Theophanes.

It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that Genesios did not consult Theophanes' chronicle when composing *On the Reigns*. However, it is extremely unlikely that he was unaware of the work's existence. He knew about Theophanes himself, for in section 1.14 he recounts a number of episodes from his life. In section 1.13 he even mentions a now-lost poem by "the blessed Theophanes the Confessor" against the iconoclastic Patriarch Theodotos Kassiteras. Furthermore, in his preface Genesios states that his work was the first continuous narrative of events after 813, implying that there was already a work which covered the preceding period. This could only have been Theophanes' chronicle. In addition, it is implausible to believe that Genesios, both the son and the grandson of a Logothetes, and himself a Patrikios and Kanikleios, was unable to obtain a copy of Theophanes' text, which was very popular and used by a number of contemporary authors such as George the Monk and the court historian of Constantine VII. We must therefore conclude that he both knew about it and had access to it, and yet decided not to consult it. There is no way to know whether he ever read it at all.

⁴³ For these discrepancies, see P. Lemerle, 'Thomas le Slav,' p. 266, n. 38, 39.

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 259, n. 13; A. Markopoulos, 'Συμβολή στη Χρονολόγηση τοῦ Γεωργίου Μοναχοῦ.' Theophanes Continuatus mentions neither the comet nor Kallinikos, although he does claim that Leo entered the City through the Golden Gate (18), here probably following the same source as Genesios.

Negligence and superficiality are the only plausible explanations for this perplexing conclusion. Genesios, planning to begin his own work with the reign of Leo V, and knowing that Theophanes' ended with the abdication of Michael I, decided that there was no reason to consult a text whose subject matter did not overlap chronologically with his own. His approach to George the Monk reveals an equally narrow vision. George's chronicle covers the period from Adam down to 843, but Genesios shows signs of having read only the last four reigns, i.e., from Leo V onward. Thus, even though Genesios does narrate a number of events that occurred before 813, he does not get any information about them from Theophanes or George. Other sources, which Genesios used because they primarily described the period after 813, led him to recount events from the reign of Nikephoros I, but he never thought to compare their accounts to the contemporary narrative of Theophanes.⁴⁵ If these conclusions are correct, it is a matter of definition whether he should be seen as a continuator of Theophanes.

Of other sources still extant, Genesios clearly used the biography of the Patriarch Nikephoros by Ignatios the Deacon and the biography of the Patriarch Ignatios by Niketas David Paphlagon.⁴⁶ There has been much speculation on the sources used by Genesios that are now lost. Not all proposals can be examined here, but most of them are presented in the footnotes to the relevant parts of the text. Some cannot be verified at all, e.g., Barišić's suggestion that Genesios used Sergios the Confessor,⁴⁷ while others, like Grégoire's conclusion that he used hagiographies of the generals Theophobos and Manuel, are reasonable conjectures.⁴⁸ Genesios' account of the revolt of Thomas the Slav was obviously influenced by the propaganda of Michael II, which is reflected in Michael's letter to the Western Emperor Louis the Pious. Genesios' sources for the revolt have been examined admirably and in detail by P. Lemerle.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ The account of the revolt of Bardanes in George the Monk (772) is clearly copied from Theophanes (479-480). Genesios' version (1.6-7) obviously derives from a different source, perhaps a biography of Leo V.

⁴⁶ Established by F. Hirsch, *Byzantinische Studien*, pp. 127-128, 159-161. Genesios' direct borrowings from those texts are noted in the footnotes to the relevant sections of the translation.

⁴⁷ 'Génésios et le Continuateur de Théophane'; 'Les sources de Génésios et du Continuateur de Théophane pour l'histoire de règne de Michel II.'

⁴⁸ 'Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères'; see also the Translator's Note before Book 3.

⁴⁹ 'Thomas le Slave.'

The possible sources of Genesios for the reign of Michael III have been investigated by P. Karlin-Hayter.⁵⁰ We have already examined and rejected her suggestion that a biography of Constantine the Armenian was among them (whether it was used directly by Genesios or not). Karlin-Hayter also postulates biographies of Bardas, Theoktistos, Theodora, and Petronas, but the existence of these works is often inferred from very meager data. We have already noted Genesios' reliance on Constantine VII's *Vita Basilii* for the reign of Basil I.

Even though the majority of Genesios' sources are now lost, we can still form an idea of how he may have employed them by examining his use of texts that are still extant, for there is no reason to believe that he treated the former any differently. His use of George the Monk and the biographies of the two Patriarchs was extremely uncritical and slavish. He virtually copied passages verbatim from them, even introducing their outdated biases into his own text. For example, he seems to have simply incorporated Michael II's propaganda into his account of the revolt of Thomas the Slav. The parallels between his account of Basil I and the *Vita Basilii* are also strong and numerous, but his reasons for endorsing the perspective of that text are obvious. Occasionally Genesios was confronted by two different traditions concerning the same events. He usually records both, even when they directly contradict each other, without bothering to ascertain the extent of their compatibility or plausibility (e.g., regarding the early careers of Thomas the Slav and Theophobos the 'Persian'). The result is a number of obvious contradictions, which even the casual reader can spot. On the whole, it seems as though there is very little in the work that can be attributed to Genesios himself. The positive treatment of Constantine the Armenian and the digression on the emirs of Crete are exceptions that we have already noted. In general, "he has borrowed the matter and made the form worse."⁵¹ Modern historians would be better off possessing his sources instead of his sloppy and pretentious compilation. Their loss makes his work undeservedly important.

4. Genesios as a Historian

The judgment of posterity has been uniformly and justly unfavorable, beginning with John Skylitzes, who criticized all historians after Theopha-

⁵⁰ 'Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III.'

⁵¹ Montaigne, *Essays* 3.8 (p. 718, D. M. Frame tr.).

nes the Confessor for partiality and narrowness of vision. Modern scholars have focused on some of the flaws that characterize the work of Genesios in particular. Grégoire's often-repeated condemnation was based on his discovery that the 'history' recounted by him and Theophanes Continuatus sometimes originated in dubious hagiographic traditions: "It is necessary to read them with the utmost mistrust and to believe them capable of anything. We must always suspect them of substituting legend for history."⁵² According to F. Dölger, "Genesios was credulous, biased and uncritical, while his style is uneven and slipshod."⁵³

Certainly, Genesios cannot escape the condemnation of his style.⁵⁴ His is some of the worst literary prose, and the blame for this cannot simply be laid at the doorstep of his age (Theophanes Continuatus is a joy to read in comparison). The main cause of his stylistic shortcomings has in fact plagued Greek literature for millennia: he tried to write in a classicizing manner well beyond his abilities, and the resulting failure is palpable on every page. Many of his sentences are hopelessly unclear, and a degree of conjecture is necessary if one is to discern their meaning. However, this is not due to an economy of language, as is sometimes the case with Thucydides. Genesios will frequently employ many convoluted clauses to make a single and relatively simple claim. Divested of the redundancy of its prose, his work would be at least a third shorter with no loss of content. Yet on some occasions he will be extremely abrupt, for no evident reason. I have tried to preserve some of these faults in the translation, while still making his text more readable than it is in the original.

As a historian Genesios has comparable flaws. The organization of his work suffers from a pervasive disregard for chronology, except in the overall sequence of reigns. This vice is particularly prominent in Book 3, and a special introduction was required to untangle the chronological mess created by the seemingly random order of its sections, and even of sentences within each section. The reader quickly realizes that Genesios had a very vague idea of what was actually happening during the reign of Theophilos. In particular, he was incapable of recognizing doublets, and thus records two or even three versions of the same event as though they were separate incidents. On occasion he even reveals a complete indifference to the chronology that he himself establishes. For instance, he calls

⁵² 'Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' p. 204.

⁵³ In *The Cambridge Medieval History*, v. 4, pt. 2, p. 230.

⁵⁴ For scholarly studies of his language, see A. Werner, 'Die Syntax des einfachen Satzes bei Genesios'; S. Linnér, 'Sprachliches und Stilistisches zu Genesios.'

Bardas a Caesar when describing events which he knows occurred before Bardas was made Caesar (cf. 4.15, 4.18). On the other hand, when he is following a reliable source, Genesios will include a sensible chronological sequence (such as in his narrative of the revolt of Thomas the Slav, after the sections on Thomas' early career). In short, his vices are his own, but his virtues are borrowed.

Neither insight nor scholarship can be found in his work, which reveals a very shallow understanding of the human dimension of history. One does not even see in him the prejudices of a mediocre historical mind, such as that of Theophanes, who at least offers us a glimpse into the passions of a contemporary engaged in heated conflict. Genesios' biases are almost all second or third hand, and there is little need to expose them here as they lie on the surface of his text. One suspects that he unthinkingly follows his sources in this respect as well, without critical reflection or even personal interest. With the exception of the glorification of his grandfather Constantine and of Basil I, his likes and dislikes were decades old by the time he wrote his history, and often irrelevant to his own age. His perpetuation of the anti-Photian propaganda of the followers of the Patriarch Ignatios, long after the differences between the two factions had been resolved, is probably due to nothing more than his slavish use of Niketas David Paphlagon. His attacks on the iconoclasts reflect the conventional nature of his religious beliefs, or the total lack of iconoclastic sources. Genesios' biases are therefore of the worst kind: entirely derivative and uninteresting.

Yet his partisanship is not relentless, for he is willing to recognize the positive qualities of individuals whom he generally portrays unfavorably. He condemns Leo V for his iconoclasm, but praises his administrative and military skills (1.16). Genesios hints that Photios also had good qualities (4.18), although he does not tell us what they were. This claim probably just derives from the portrayal of the learned but proud prelate contained in his main source, Niketas' *Vita Ignatii* (col. 509). Genesios gives a mixed picture of the Caesar Bardas, but again this may be due to his use of conflicting sources. On the whole, he fits neatly into the progression, noted by Romilly Jenkins, from the vicious partisan abuse found in Theophanes to the magnificently rich and nuanced character portraits of Psellos.⁵⁵

For all his partisan religious bias, Genesios devotes relatively little attention to Church affairs. The discussion of Leo V's ecclesiastical

⁵⁵ 'The Classical Background of the *Scriptores Post Theophanem*,' pp. 13-15.

policies is restricted to three sections (1.13-14, 1.22), while the religious policies of Michael II and Theophilos receive only one short notice each (2.14 and 3.19 respectively). The restoration of icons is treated extensively (4.2-5), but almost all of Genesios' information about it is legendary. The conflict between Photios and Ignatios is treated in a single section (4.18), which preserves only a brief moment of a thirty-year clash. It is possible that Genesios narrates the deposition and torture of Ignatios merely to set the stage for the compassionate, and probably also legendary, actions of his own grandfather Constantine.

Genesios is far more interested in Byzantine politics (i.e., court intrigue) and military affairs. Yet he seems to lack standards by which to judge the relevance and importance of events. He devotes much space to anecdotal information about various individuals, while completely ignoring events that were crucial for the history of the Empire. For instance, he does not say a word about Krum's siege of Constantinople and Leo V's attempt to assassinate him, though he does tell us that Leo sang poorly. Such omissions are probably not due to bias, but rather to ignorance or bad judgment. Genesios will often mention an event merely to set the stage for an intrusive display of his knowledge of etymology and mythology.⁵⁶ His work is full of portents, omens, prophesies, and instances of divine intervention.

These faults characterize especially his account of the reign of Basil. It has been suggested that his presentation of Basil's foreign policies displays a bias toward eastern affairs, that Genesios favored a political faction which believed that the Empire's true interests lay in the east, and that he consequently portrayed Basil's western ambitions in a bad light. His omissions, as well as the presentation of events that he does include, thus seem to have been politically motivated.⁵⁷ This theory is attractively developed and fits the broader pattern of elite resistance to Basil's western policies. But it assumes a level of sophistication well beyond Genesios' apparent capabilities or interests. It is more likely that his selection of events from the *Vita Basilii* was motivated by the kinds of considerations outlined above. He includes episodes that involve demonic prophesies, foreign lands that allow him to parade his knowledge of etymology, mysterious winds that carry divine messages, and the

⁵⁶ For the sources of Genesios' antiquarian knowledge see A. Diller, 'Excerpts from Strabo and Stephanus in Byzantine Chronicles.'

⁵⁷ B. Blysidou, *ΕΠ*, pp. 77-81; 'Αντιδράσεις στη Δυτική Πολιτική του Βασιλείου Α', pp. 133-137; cf. also 'Η Συνωμοσία του Κουρκούα στο "Βίο Βασιλείου",' p. 56: Genesios may have yielded to pressure from Constantine VII to avoid referring to the conspiracy of Kourkouas.

extravagant and fantastic efforts of Basil to discipline his unruly troops. Genesios' political bias probably did not extend beyond the pro-Macedonian propaganda that pleased his patron Constantine VII. His only real political objective was to find favor with that Emperor.

Yet despite its many faults, Genesios' work is a valuable source for the history of the ninth century, for it preserves information, both factual and legendary, that cannot be found elsewhere. This fact by itself justifies its translation.

5. Notes on the Translation

This translation is based on the text edited by A. Lesmüller-Werner and I. Thurn (1978). Lesmüller-Werner has also published an accurate and smooth German translation (1989), which I have consulted with profit, though I have disagreed on the interpretation of a few minor passages. The Latin translation contained in the Bonn (1838) and *PG* editions also proved useful. The recent modern Greek translation is untrustworthy, containing many mistakes and paraphrasing difficult sections. Occasionally, it even reproduces the original text inaccurately.

A note on the division of the text into sections. Byzantinists, unlike classicists, have created unnecessary problems for themselves by the peculiar practice of citing texts by the page numbers of their most recent edition. This causes no real problems in the case of texts like Theophanes Continuatus which have not been published for 160 years. For such texts, the page numbers of a particular edition have become established as a definitive referencing system, and can be found in the margins of modern translations. But with Genesios matters are more complicated. Up to 1978 he was cited by reference to the pagination of the Bonn edition; after then the pagination of the *CFHB* edition has been used. One must now consult two editions of the text in order to follow the footnotes of modern scholars. To alleviate this problem, the *CFHB* edition contains four separate referencing systems: book and section numbers, its own page numbers, and the page numbers of the Bonn edition in brackets at the top of each page (it also numbers the lines of the text in the margins). The only way to halt and eliminate this needless accumulation of numbers is to cite texts by book and section number, for these alone do not vary across different editions. This, therefore, is the system that I employ in all citations of Genesios' text. Nevertheless, I have also included the page numbers of the *CFHB* edition in brackets in bold within the text itself. It is

unlikely that there will soon be another edition of Genesios, and Byzantinists are even less likely to change their habits.

The transliteration of names and administrative terms poses similar problems since no method has been accepted as standard. I generally follow the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, which prefers to transliterate directly rather than to use Latinized forms. Where direct English equivalents exist for proper names I have used them (e.g., John for Ioannes). I have otherwise allowed the Byzantines to speak with their own language and with their own terms, except in the case of their word for Caliph, the horrific 'Ameramnoue.'

The footnotes to the translation do not contain comprehensive citations to all the relevant Byzantine texts. For such citations the reader is referred to the *CFHB* edition. The notes are here used to present and possibly clarify historiographical and textual problems. They contain references to the works of modern historians who treat those problems, and summarize their views and conclusions. Geographical, antiquarian, and prosopographical information is also included to facilitate the understanding of the text. A glossary has been appended to the end of the translation, including entries on terms, places, and people mentioned *more than once* in the text. I must here acknowledge my debt to the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, which allowed me to locate the most up to date bibliography. This invaluable tool is a solid testament to the progress of the field.

Citations to the Old Testament refer to the LXX numbering. Translations of passages from the Bible are my own, from the *Iliad* mostly Richmond Lattimore's, and from the *Odyssey* Robert Fitzgerald's.

6. Suggestions for Further Reading in English

General Histories of Byzantium

The Cambridge Medieval History, v. 4: *The Byzantine Empire*, pt. 1: *Byzantium and its Neighbours*; pt. 2: *Government, Church and Civilization*, ed. Joan Hussey, Cambridge, 1966-7.

Ostrogorsky, George, *History of the Byzantine State*, tr. by Joan Hussey, revised edition, Rutgers, 1969.

Treadgold, Warren, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, Stanford, 1997.

Topical Studies

Hussey, Joan M., *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, Oxford, 1986.

Treadgold, Warren, *Byzantium and Its Army 284-1081*, Stanford, 1995.

Surveys of the Period Covered by Genesis

Bury, J. B., *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire From the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (A.D. 802-867)*, New York, 1965.

Jenkins, Romilly, *Byzantium, The Imperial Centuries AD 610-1071*, Toronto, 1966.

Tobias, Norman, *Basil I (867-886), The Founder of the Macedonian Dynasty: A Study of the Political and Military History of the Byzantine Empire in the Ninth Century*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1969; available from University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor, MI.

Toynbee, Arnold, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, Oxford, 1973.

Treadgold, Warren, *The Byzantine Revival 780-842*, Stanford, 1988.

Whittow, Mark, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025*, Berkeley, 1996.

[3] I have completed this book of history as you commanded,
O Emperor, after much study and great labors,
and have given it to you as a gift, that it be known to be the product
not only of my love for your rule but also of my own desire.

Preface

The knowledge of past events confers great benefit by itself and can also inspire those who receive that benefit to record those events. Hence I have now undertaken the complex task of writing about them, by listening¹ both to men who lived then and who have some limited knowledge of what transpired and to oral traditions that have come down from that time. I embark upon this venture so that I may seem to be conferring some benefit upon those who come after me,² but also so that I may enjoy the fruits of it for myself, since I have been commanded to make this inquiry by the Emperor Constantine. For he is by nature and by choice a lover of beauty, and more learned than all the Emperors of the past. He is the son of Leo, the all-wise and ever-memorable Emperor. His request was that I recount events that have not been included in a book of history, starting with the reign of the impious and mad Emperor Leo the descendant of Amalek, and following the sequence of events thereafter.

¹ By 'listening' many ancient authors meant 'reading,' as the latter was an audible activity in antiquity and in Byzantium. Hence this may be a reference to textual research, rather than to oral interviews (cf. D. M. Schenkeveld, 'Prose Usages of *AKOYEIN* 'To Read'; H. Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz*, p. 125 ff.; see, for instance, the fifth-century ecclesiastical historian Socrates, who often uses the verb 'to hear' where we would say 'to read': 2.28, 3.3, etc.). However, in his investigation of Genesisios' sources, J. N. Ljubarskij takes the verb literally and postulates oral sources of information ('Theophanes Continuatus und Genesisios. Das Problem einer gemeinsamen Quelle').

² The intent and motivation alleged here was most fully developed by the Hellenistic historian Polybios, whose work was carefully studied and excerpted by the scholars who worked under Constantine VII. But similar sentiments can be found as early as Thucydides (esp. 1.22). Genesisios may have been inspired by the preface of Agathias (according to H. Lieberich, *Studien zu den Proömien*, v. 2, pp. 21-22) or, more probably, by the preface of the *Life of Peter of Athos* (according to the editors of Genesisios, A. Lesmüller-Werner and I. Thurn).

Book 1: Leo V, the descendant of Amalek (813-820)

1. In the second year of the reign of Michael,³ the son-in-law of the Emperor Nikephoros,⁴ which was the year 6322 since the Creation of the world, in the seventh indiction,⁵ the Romans were defeated by Krum, the ruler of the Bulgarians.⁶ At this time Leo, [4] the Strategos of the Anatolians,⁷ did not participate in the battle but treacherously withdrew with the forces under his command, watching for the opportunity to usurp the throne. As a result, the Emperor Michael fled with his remaining forces.

2. Some, however, have claimed that Leo alone attacked a portion of the Bulgarian forces and fought against them bravely, reaping much glory as a result. The Emperor, after making arrangements for the retreat, laid most of the blame on his subordinates, claiming that they had disregarded their written oaths and created dissension, the outcome of which is always defeat. He ordered Leo to remain encamped outside the City with the forces under his command, on account of his partial success against the Bulgarians, to prevent the latter from becoming contemptuous of the flight and the small numbers of the Romans for a long time thereafter.⁸ As a consequence of these events, the army ridiculed the Emperor's

³ Michael I Rangabe (811-813).

⁴ Nikephoros I (802-811). Michael I Rangabe was married to Nikephoros' daughter Prokopia.

⁵ The events described in this section occurred in 813. The chronological system employed by Genesios dates the Creation to 5508 B.C., but he has made a mistake in this case: the correct date is 6321 *anno mundi*, indiction 6 (see V. Grumel, *La chronologie*, p. 250).

⁶ Bulgarian Khan (802-814). In 811 Krum had inflicted a disastrous defeat upon the Byzantine army and turned the Emperor Nikephoros' skull into a drinking cup, forcing others drink from it (Theophanes 491; but cf. the identical custom of the Scythians in Herodotos 4.64-65, and the Byzantines sometimes thought of the Bulgarians as Scythians, e.g., Genesios 1.23, 2.8, 4.7. The tenth-century Russian ruler Svyatoslav suffered the exact same fate as Nikephoros at the hands of the Petcheneg chieftain Kurya: *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, p. 90). The battle referred to in this section of Genesios is that of Versinikia, north of Adrianople, which took place on 22 June 813.

⁷ These were the soldiers of the Anatolikon theme (encompassing most of central Asia Minor).

⁸ By examining all the sources for the battle, D. Turner ('The Origins and Accession

incompetence, considered him lacking in all authority, and unanimously sought to raise the general Leo to the throne. Leo, however, was seized by a great and dark foreboding at the thought of his elevation to the throne, as had once happened to Gaius Caesar at the bridge,⁹ but Michael from Amorion¹⁰ threatened to kill him if he did not agree to the proposal. He demanded only Leo's consent, promising that he would make the entry into the city and the palace an easy task, which the army itself would quickly accomplish.

3. Before these events, when the Emperor Michael had almost reached the City, he was greeted by one of his officials named John, who had been entrusted with the protection of the walls¹¹ and was of the family of the Exaboulíoi.¹² Paying the customary respects to the Emperor and grieving for the general misfortune, he inquired, "Which one of the Strategoi, O Despot, has been placed in command of the armed forces that remain?" [5] The Emperor answered, "Leo, the commander of the first theme, a shrewd and straightforward man." To this John replied that it was dangerous for one man alone to be placed in charge "unaccompanied by any of your own trusted servants." The Emperor, who suspected nothing of plots against himself, offered reasons to Exaboulíos why Leo would never aspire to overthrow him. So the Emperor went off to the palace where not long afterwards the news of Leo's revolt arrived.

of Leo V (813-820), pp. 187 ff.), concludes, against current scholarly consensus, that Leo did not desert the Roman side at Versinikia (for a similar reconstruction of the battle, see Th. Korres, *Λέων Ε' ο Αρμένιος*, pp. 47-52). Michael may in fact have been thinking of abdicating at this point (Theophanes 502). According to D. Turner's reconstruction of events, Michael, over the objections of his relatives and confidants, willingly turned the throne over to Leo: "Leo's accession was considered in every respect legal following the abdication of Michael I, who had no intention of spilling blood for a throne he did not want" (p. 196). Turner, however, does not explain why Michael's son was castrated (see below, section 1.5).

⁹ The crossing of the Rubicon is meant. Genesios' ultimate Greek source is probably Plutarch, *Caesar* 32.

¹⁰ Later the Emperor Michael II (820-829; see Book 2).

¹¹ I.e., he held the position of 'Count of the Walls,' which seems to have been responsible for the guarding of the city and of the palace walls (see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, pp. 67-68; R. Guiland, 'Comte des Murs'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 337; and J. F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 256-275).

¹² John Exaboulíos was an extremely adept politician. As Count of the Walls he warned Michael I against Leo, who subsequently made him his Logothetes of the Dromos (see section 2.1). John helped Leo to spy on Michael the Amorion (1.17), but Michael retained him in his previous position after he gained the throne and even took his advice to disregard the accusations of the defeated rebel Thomas (2.8). John was probably the recipient of Theodore of Stoudios, *Letter* 424 ("to John the Logothetes"). I know of no other members of the Exaboulíos family.

This caused the Emperor considerable distress, and some urged him to resist the tyrant¹³ fiercely and in every possible way. But Michael, being of a mild disposition and not at all bloodthirsty, discouraged all from such an act of murder, as he preferred to follow kindly the commands of God. He went so far as to send the man in charge of his household servants to Leo bearing the royal insignia, and also urged the Senate to go out and greet him, so that not a drop of Christian blood would be shed on his own account. At this point his wife Prokopia¹⁴ said in jealousy, "It would be terrible, terrible, if the wife of the tyrant Leo should wear the crown of the Queen!¹⁵" and called her rival "Barka."¹⁶ Michael replied to her with gentle words and said, "It is good for events to conform to the will of the Lord."

4. When the tyrant reached the church of John the Baptist (built by Stoudios) through the Golden Gate,¹⁷ many of the Senators, indeed almost all of them, approached and attended him, and, along with the crowd that had gathered, escorted him to the palace. And when he entered and stood before the Bronze Gates,¹⁸ he offered upon the circular surface made entirely of porphyry marble¹⁹ a prayer of thanks to the icon of Christ the God which was there, either because he truly believed or

¹³ The Byzantines used words like 'tyrant' and 'apostate' to designate illegitimate Emperors, rebels, and usurpers.

¹⁴ The daughter of the Emperor Nikephoros I. She wielded much influence over Michael (Scriptor Incertus 335).

¹⁵ This crown had a special name: modiolos. It seems to have been used in coronation ceremonies; see P. Charanis, 'The Imperial Crown Modiolus and its Constitutional Significance,' and the notices that were written in response to this article (listed in the bibliography along with Charanis' article).

¹⁶ This is a Byzantine insult of unknown meaning (cf. the *CFHB* edition of Genesios, *index* pp. 93, 105; also J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 27) and not the woman's actual name (as is assumed by W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 198-199). The syntax of Genesios (and that of Theophanes Continuatus 18) clearly supports the former hypothesis. For its possible meanings, see M. Z. Kopidakis, Βιβλιοκρισία του *Josephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, pp. 418-419. Cf. the spirited stand of Theodora when her husband Justinian was in danger of losing his throne to the rioters in the Capital (Prokopios, *History of the Wars* 1.24.32 ff.).

¹⁷ Leo probably entered the City through the Charisian Gate (Theophanes 502; see the discussion by M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, p. 209).

¹⁸ This was the 'Chalke,' the main entrance to the palace from the north. Above it was the icon of Christ Chalkites, and each of the two periods of iconoclasm was initiated by its removal (see A. Frolow, 'Le Christ de la Chalce'; for the entrance in general, see C. Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*). For a map of the palace that indicates this area see A. Vogt, *Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, Le Livre des Cérémonies*, Commentaire, v. 1 = A. Guillou, *La civilisation byzantine*, pp. 292-295; a different map can be found in R. Guiland, *ETCB*. Almost nothing of the Great Palace remains now above ground.

¹⁹ μαρμάρω. But technically, porphyry is not a marble.

merely for outward display.²⁰ He then took off the cloak that he was wearing, a garment of rose-colored shades and eagle patterns, which in the local idiom they call "colobion"²¹ and made a great display of giving it, with its belt unbuckled, to Michael, the leader of his cavalry escort.²² This was done in accordance with the old custom of the generals. Michael put it on at once, [6] and this seemed to those who know of such matters to be an omen that he would rule after Leo. Also, in a certain place of the palace which is called the Skyla, Michael insulted the royal attire of Leo by stepping upon its hem. He did this either out of rashness or because some higher providence wished to foretell the future. And perceiving the event, Leo took it as a sign that Michael would revolt against him.

5. As Leo proceeded into the palace, the Emperor Michael and his wife swiftly cut their hair, and, along with their children, became humble suppliants in the church of the All-Holy Virgin Mary (which is known as Pharos) hoping to be treated with leniency by the new Emperor. Moved by their entreaties, he spared their lives and sent Michael to a monastery to live in accordance with the rules of the monastic life, and also generously granted him a fixed yearly stipend of gold. But he sent Michael's wife and children far away. He condemned one of the children who was named Ignatios to become a eunuch.²³

6. Leo thus seized the reins of power. At this time, the things that had been revealed concerning Leo to Bardanios the Patrikios, surnamed the Turk,²⁴ came to light. This Bardanios, when he was the commander of the Anatolikon theme, was consumed with the desire to attempt to seize

²⁰ The apparent virtue of another iconoclast is later treated with the same skepticism: see section 3.10.

²¹ For this form of tunic, see Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis* 1.10.5 with n. 79 by J. J. Reiske.

²² I.e., 'Protostrator.' This is again Michael from Amorion.

²³ Michael I Rangabe abdicated on 11 July 813 and died on 11 January 844 (P. Grierson, 'Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337-1042),' pp. 55-56), after being exiled to the island of Prote (cf. R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins*, p. 71). He had two daughters (Georgo and Theophano) and three sons (Staurakios, Theophylaktos, and Niketas), of whom the first died before his father's abdication and the third was renamed Ignatios, later becoming the famous Patriarch of Constantinople (847-858, 867-877); see section 4.18 below, and Niketas David Paphlagon, *Vita Ignatii* col. 492.

²⁴ This is probably not an indication of his ethnicity. Bardanios/Bardanes was clearly of Armenian descent; see E. Kountoura-Galake, 'Η Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ Βαρδάνη Τοῦρκου,' pp. 203-4; C. Toumanoff, 'Caucasia and Byzantium,' p. 150.

the Imperial palace so that he could then rule the Empire.²⁵ He wanted to refer this desire circumspectly to the consideration of a monk who possessed the power of prognostication, and who lived in the region of Philomelion.²⁶ He took with him to this consultation Leo, a man who had distinguished himself with many signs of bravery, and who had a manly and grim-looking countenance. [7] He was middle aged, sociable, and had been brought up in the same theme at a place called Pidra.²⁷ Along with them went Michael from Amorion, whose habit of speech had become his distinguishing mark,²⁸ and Thomas from the lake of Gazourou,²⁹ who was also an Armenian by descent, and no less a brave and restless man. It is said that when Bardanios approached the monk, the latter revealed to him all his hidden designs, and went so far as to foretell his total loss of property and eventual blinding. Bardanios became indignant at these words, as they did not accord at all with his desires, but he nevertheless said the customary prayer and gave orders that their departure be prepared. But when the monk saw the followers bring up the horses, he hastily urged Bardanios to return and hear more. The latter turned back with renewed confidence hoping to hear prophesied what he desired in his heart. But the prophetic man again dashed his hopes. "Make sure that you entirely abandon your wicked plan, which has entered your mind for no good reason. You will suffer, as I have just told you, the loss of your property and of your sight. But of the men in your retinue who are now

²⁵ It is not entirely clear whether Genesios is trying to ascribe to Bardanes a belief similar to that expressed by the eleventh-century writer Kekaumenos: "The Emperor who holds Constantinople always wins" (*Strategikon* 74).

²⁶ About 50 miles south of Amorion in Lykaonia, in central Asia Minor; see K. Belke and N. Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien* (= *TIB* v. 7), pp. 359-361. Genesios is possibly the first source to relate the following miraculous story; see S. Mauromate-Katsougiannopoulou, "Η Επανάσταση του Στρατηγού Βαρδάνη στις Σύγχρονες και Μεταγενέστερες Αφηγηματικές Πηγές."

²⁷ I.e., in the Anatolikon theme (cf. also Theophanes Continuatus 6). Our knowledge of this place does not extend beyond these two passages. It should not be confused with *Pidrum*: K. Belke with M. Restle, *Galatien und Lykaonien* (= *TIB* v. 4), pp. 215-216. D. Turner ('The Origins and Accession of Leo V (813-820),' pp. 176-77) argues that Leo was Bardanes' nephew.

²⁸ Michael II was known as 'the Stutterer.'

²⁹ It is not clear what the nominative form of the genitive "Gazourou" is supposed to be. The name is properly Gazoura, actually a town in Pontos (cf. D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, pp. 180, 1071; A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTP*, p. 13). Thomas is more generally known as 'Thomas the Slav.' According to P. Lemerle ('Thomas le Slave,' p. 284) he came from a Slavic family that had been settled near Armenia. H. Köpstein ('Zur Erhebung des Thomas,' pp. 65-67) reviews the conflicting evidence and rightly concludes that Thomas' ethnicity was not considered an important factor by contemporaries. Thomas' revolt against Michael II is described in Book 2 of Genesios.

bringing you the horses,³⁰ the first and the second will wear the Imperial crown, and the third will manage to proclaim himself Emperor but will swiftly be put to death." These words made Bardanios wail aloud in grief, and, after uttering some wrathful insult against the monk, he informed his servants Leo, Michael, and Thomas, saying: "After you, Leo, have become Emperor, and after you, Thomas, have proclaimed your revolt, Michael will kill both of you, and then he will remain entirely safe upon the throne."³¹

7. Thereupon Bardanios, embittered at heart, returned to the theme that lay under his jurisdiction. Gathering the soldiers who were under his command and others who were of like mind and shared his pretensions, he vainly revolted against the Emperor Nikephoros and encamped in Bithynia.³² When the Emperor heard of these actions he assembled a large force and sent it against Bardanios. [8] Surprised by the expedition, Bardanios surrendered to the Emperor and requested a guarantee of immunity in return, which he achieved easily by receiving a promise made on the sign of the cross.³³ He submitted, condemned his own action, and consigned himself to some property he cultivated on the island of Prote.³⁴ A short time afterwards, however, some men from Lykaonia attacked him by surprise and blinded him, acting either on their own initiative, or incited to the deed by the Emperor, or simply because they wished to please the Emperor. Then they went to a church and requested forgiveness for their action.³⁵

³⁰ For the retinues of the powerful in Byzantine society, see H.-G. Beck, 'Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen,' esp. pp. 18-22 for Bardanes.

³¹ Note that the prediction places Thomas' revolt *before* the murder of Leo. This claim was in fact an aspect of Michael II's propaganda, invented after Thomas' defeat and propagated by many of our sources; see sections 2.4-5 below and notes.

³² Bardanes revolted on 18 July 803, and surrendered on 8 September. For his career and revolt see in general E. Kountoura-Galake, 'Η Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ Βαρδάνη Τούρκου.' According to some sources, Nikephoros had entrusted Bardanes with the command of all the themes of Asia Minor before he revolted (see *ibid.* p. 205). The possible financial motives of the troops that supported him are summarized by W. Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, p. 245.

³³ Cf. the surrender of Theophobos in 3.8 and the promise made to Manuel in 3.10. According to Theophanes Continuatus (9) Nikephoros sent the very cross he wore around his neck to Bardanes as a pledge of immunity. This was a standard way for the Byzantines to grant amnesties and promise immunities (cf. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* 2.5.6-8).

³⁴ Other sources speak of a monastery founded there by Bardanes: see E. Kountoura-Galake, 'Η Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ Βαρδάνη Τούρκου,' p. 208, and R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins*, pp. 70-72.

³⁵ Theophanes (480), who hated Nikephoros I, claims that the Emperor sent these men to blind Bardanes. For Nikephoros' otherwise attested reliance on Lykaonians, see J.

8. When Bardianos' revolt had swelled up, Leo the Armenian (and Assyrian)³⁶ went over to the side of the Emperor, and was followed by Michael from Amorion. The former received as a reward the command of the Phoiveratoi, the latter was appointed Komes of the Korte.³⁷ Thomas, however, remained faithful to his own master even in these dangers. After some time had passed and Leo was second-in-command of the Anatolians, he showed great bravery in battle against the Ishmaelites.³⁸ He was honored by the Emperor Michael (who reigned after Staurakios³⁹) with the magnificent title of Patrikios.

9. This Michael⁴⁰ had a female household servant through whom a Pythian spirit occasionally operated.⁴¹ She was once hurrying along the region paved with stone⁴² known as the Boukoleon and cried out in a loud voice to the Emperor, "Step down, step down, leave what does not belong to you." This was said many times and the Emperor was understandably surprised and no less worried. He related this incident to the spatharokandidatos⁴³ Theodotos, an intimate acquaintance who was known by the name of Kassiteras⁴⁴ and was the son of the Patrikios Michael of the clan of Melissenos.⁴⁵ Theodotos was to watch for the next time the girl became possessed, and then to make sure to take her into

F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 246-251. Defeated rebels were often blinded in Byzantine history, in some cases ostensibly against the wishes of the ruling Emperor or his generals: see, e.g., the failed usurper Leo Phokas by Romanos Lekapenos in Theophanes Continuatus 392 ff.; the rebel Nikephoros Bryennios by Alexios Komnenos (later Alexios I) in Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* 1.6.9, also 9.9.6.

³⁶ See the glossary under 'Amalek' for Leo's ancestry.

³⁷ κόμης τῆς κόρτης. This official pitched the Emperor's tent on campaign and was in charge of camp security; see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, p. 43; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 341, and the literature cited there.

³⁸ For the controversies surrounding the career of Leo before he became Emperor, see D. Turner, 'The Origins and Accession of Leo V (813-820),' pp. 177-181.

³⁹ Staurakios ruled from 28 July to 1 October 811 after the death of his father Nikephoros I. The brevity of his reign, and his death, were due to a wound he received in the very battle in which his father was killed.

⁴⁰ Still referring to Michael I Rangabe (811-813).

⁴¹ Cf. Acts 16.16, an extension of the prophetic inspiration of the Pythia, the prophetess of Apollo at Delphi, to prophetic divination in general; see also section 3.15 below.

⁴² Or 'rocky' (cf. J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 25, n. 2).

⁴³ An honorific title. For its relative rank and history, see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, pp. 20-23, 26-27; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 297.

⁴⁴ Theodotos I Kassiteras, later iconoclastic Patriarch of Constantinople (1 April 815 - January 821).

⁴⁵ For this Michael see R. Guillard, 'Patrices de Léon III à Michel II,' pp. 343-344.

some house, interrogate her, and make her reveal who [9] the owner of the house was and what his characteristic features were.⁴⁶ She revealed the desired name and character of the man, and then urged Theodotos to go to the acropolis at a particular time where he would meet two men.⁴⁷ The one who rode upon a mule was to occupy the Imperial throne. So much concerning the possessed girl; but it is more appropriate to inquire into the Emperor's careful investigation of the matter, since he was, after all, very concerned to safeguard his own rule. Theodotos was questioned in detail by the Emperor and he replied that he had understood nothing from the babbling of the pythonical girl. Yet he went to the place she had designated, saw what she had foretold, and took the man with him into the church of Paul the Apostle where the funds for the nourishment of the orphans are kept.⁴⁸ There they exchanged pledges, and Theodotos plucked up the courage to say to Leo that "through a divine vision great things about your future have been revealed to me, according to which you will certainly come to rule over the Romans."

10. There was a state of war between the Romans and the Bulgarians,⁴⁹ and Krum, the leader of the Bulgarians, suggested that the Bulgarians who had sought refuge in the opposite camp should be returned to him in exchange for the Roman deserters. The Emperor was agreeable to the idea, even though most of his leading men were intensely opposed to it, not least of all Theoktistos the Magistros.⁵⁰ Because of their opposition no agreement could be reached, and therefore both sides resumed hostilities. Thus the Romans and the Bulgarians marched out against each other, and in the battle that ensued the Roman army was utterly

⁴⁶ The purpose of this inquiry was to test and establish the prophetess' credentials.

⁴⁷ Interrogations of people possessed by demons are common in Byzantine literature; see, e.g., Theodoret, *A History of the Monks of Syria* 13.10-12.

⁴⁸ For this church and its orphanage see D. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, 2nd (revised) edition, pp. 178-180.

⁴⁹ Referring to the disastrous invasion of Bulgaria by Nikephoros I in 811 and its aftermath.

⁵⁰ For other items in Krum's proposal, see Theophanes 497. St Theodore of Stoudios also urged Michael to refuse Krum's terms (cf. also Theophanes 497-8, a historian who was opposed to the war party). For a summary of the proposals set forth by scholars to explain why Krum desired peace when he was winning the war, and why the Byzantines rejected it when they were losing, see Th. Korres, *Λέων Ε' ο Αρμένιος*, pp. 32-45. Korres suggests that the tides of war in the Balkan theater were expected to shift in favor of the Byzantines because of their recent successes against the Arabs in the east, which would allow them to devote more resources to the fight against the Bulgarians.

defeated,⁵¹ as it seems that divine Providence had decided against us, for reasons beyond our understanding.

11. But let us return to the point from which we digressed. Leo was proclaimed publicly as Emperor, and appointed Thomas (who was of the same age as himself) Tourmarch of the Phoiveratoi, while Michael (whose son was Leo's god-child [10] since his baptism⁵²) was given the rank of Patrikios and the command of the Exkoubitoi.⁵³

12. The Bulgarians, in any case a hostile people, were now elated by their recent victory. The ensuing devastation of lands and dwellings at their hands by fire and enslavement exceeded the usual. Thus it was sensible for the Emperor, who desired peace, to send an embassy to their ruler to make a treaty. The ruling Bulgarian rejected the offer, as he was an arrogant barbarian.⁵⁴ Hence Leo hastened to march out against him, and during the fierce battle that ensued, our own people were ordered to retreat by an Imperial command. Even the Emperor himself fled along with the troops. But then, with the Bulgarians in pursuit, he faced about and suddenly stood his ground with the troops that were with him, attacking the enemy. He defeated them and gained a total victory. Not only this, but he prevailed over the very leader of the Bulgarians.⁵⁵ Of the children of the Bulgarians, some he dashed against the rocks,⁵⁶ the rest he

⁵¹ This section refers back to the battle of Versinikia (with which Book 1 began). The battle in fact occurred one year after Krum's proposal for an exchange of prisoners (see Theophanes 497-501).

⁵² This son was the later Emperor Theophilos (829-842; see Book 3). Genesios' statement allows us to date Theophilos' birth to 812/813 (see W. Treadgold, 'The Problem of the Marriage of the Emperor Theophilos,' pp. 337-338).

⁵³ I.e., he was made Domestikos of the tagma of Exkoubitoi.

⁵⁴ He was Omurtag, Bulgarian Khan (814/5-831), the son of Krum. Genesios has here skipped over many years of warfare, including the Bulgarian attack on Constantinople, Leo's attempt to assassinate Krum, etc. For a narrative of the warfare of those years, see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 353-359; W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 200-207; Th. Korres, *Λέων Ε' ο Αρμένιος*, pp. 80-86.

⁵⁵ Genesios' account of this battle is confused. It took place in 816 and was followed by the thirty year treaty between the Byzantines and the Bulgarians mentioned later in section 2.7 (see W. Treadgold, 'The Bulgars' Treaty with the Byzantines in 816,' pp. 217-219). See the narrative reconstruction in J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 356-358 and Th. Korres, *Λέων Ε' ο Αρμένιος*, pp. 87-91 (who date the battle to 813); and W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 214-217.

⁵⁶ Cf. Psalm 136.9. Both Bury and Treadgold take Genesios' Biblical allusion as historical fact. Theophanes Continuatus (25) claims that it was the Bulgarians who killed the children of the Byzantines, which is the version accepted by Th. Korres, *Λέων Ε' ο Αρμένιος*, pp. 89-91.

punished terribly on a threshing-floor, that "works of retribution," in the words of the poet, might be thus accomplished.⁵⁷

13. The Emperor then remembered the monk of Philomelion, and sent him thank-offerings to meet his needs, since the course of events had shown him to be a true prophet. But in the meantime that monk had died, and it happened that another monk, named Sabbatios, lived in his place in the same cell. This one secretly opposed the worship of the icons, [11] and after hearing out the messenger of the Emperor he dismissed him on the grounds that the sender was unworthy of the Imperial robe because he adhered to idols, namely the icons revered by the Augusta Irene⁵⁸ and the renowned Patriarch Tarasios.⁵⁹ This wretched man foolishly insulted Irene by calling her a Leopardess and a Bakchanal, while Tarasios the archpriest of God he called "Taraxios."⁶⁰ Wherefore he sent a message to Leo announcing that God would destroy his rule if he did not destroy the icons.⁶¹ Smitten as with a thunderbolt by these words, the Emperor summoned Theodotos to his side and showed him the monk's message. As for Theodotos, he seized the opportunity to further his own designs and boldly told the Emperor, adding evil to evil, about another monk who lived in the region of the Maurianos⁶² (specifying that it lay near to the Dagisteas⁶³) and who performed wondrous things. Theodotos presented him as another Saint Anthony the Great, "And whatever he chooses to say to Your Majesty, you should exert yourself to implement it!" Having said these deceitful words to the Emperor he went to this other monk and, in accordance with the plans he had laid out, said the following words to him. "Tomorrow night, at a set hour, I will escort to you the

⁵⁷ Homer, *Odyssey* 1.379, 2.144.

⁵⁸ Irene (797-802), famous for being the first woman to rule the Byzantine Empire in her own name and for blinding her son Constantine VI (780-797). Genesios calls Irene 'Augusta' (σεβαστή) because it is similar (in fact cognate) to the word 'revered' (σεβομένη) which he uses to describe the icons.

⁵⁹ Patriarch of Constantinople (784-806), and later a saint. Along with Irene, he restored the worship of icons and thus ended the first period of iconoclasm. See in general W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 74-89.

⁶⁰ I.e., a trouble-maker.

⁶¹ For a different tradition, which includes an encounter between Leo and Sabbatios, see the *Epistola ad Theophilum Imperatorem* col. 368-372.

⁶² A long portico in Constantinople, stretching northward from the baths of Dagisteas to the Golden Horn; see R. Janin, *CB*, pp. 43, 358, and map 1.

⁶³ The Dagisteas included a palace and some baths, and was situated between the forum of Constantine and the forum of Theodosius; see *ibid.* pp. 210, 310-311; also the discussion by A. Vogt, *Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, Le Livre des Cérémonies, Commentaire*, v. 2, p. 167. The palace of Dagisteas had been given to Leo by Nikephoros I in 803.

Emperor dressed in shabby clothes, that you two may converse about the faith and other important matters. I advise you to tell him that he will be cursed and will soon depart from this life, if he does not conform to the dogma of Leo who sprang forth from Isauria.⁶⁴ If he does observe this advice closely, then tell him that he will rule for seventy-two years.”⁶⁵ Thus did Theodotos seek to manipulate Leo’s intense love of life and ambition to bring his own plans to fruition. For the Emperor was indeed seized by these desires, and boasted much of his youth. These matters were thus prudently organized for the Emperor by Theodotos and the obscure monk of the Maurianos,⁶⁶ in a like manner to the plots of the arch-heretics. When the Emperor, accompanied by Kassiteras, came to the monk and began to speak to him, the latter reproached him, as he had advance knowledge of the disguise, by saying, “It is not proper for you, who are an Emperor, to wear common clothing and in this way pretend to be someone you are not, and also to believe that you would not be recognized.” Stunned by this engineered divination, the Emperor accepted the authenticity of the monk’s powers. Of course this had been purposely planned in advance to serve Theodotos’ desires, as has been publicly exposed by the blessed Theophanes the Confessor in metrical verse.⁶⁷

[12] 14. Hence the destruction of the holy icons was ordered by the Emperor. When he tried to force the Patriarch Nikephoros to conform to this policy, the latter absolutely refused and was thoughtlessly exiled⁶⁸ (indeed when he was placing the crown on Leo’s head he felt pain as

⁶⁴ Emperor Leo III (717-741), founder of the ‘Isaurian’ dynasty, who initiated the iconoclast controversy. For his policies see S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III*, who proves that Leo was not in fact an Isaurian.

⁶⁵ The initiation of iconoclastic policies by various rulers was commonly ascribed to the influence of Jewish wizards and soothsayers, who promised long reigns, etc., for example, by Theophanes (401-2) concerning the iconoclastic Umayyad Caliph Yazid (ruled 720-724; cf. A. Vasiliev, ‘The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721’). Similar tales were told about the first Byzantine Iconoclastic Emperor, Leo III (717-741), which often connected his policies with those of Yazid (for an able discussion of this highly complex and often legendary tradition, see S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Leo III*, c. 7 and Appendices 1A, 3C).

⁶⁶ A pun: ...ἐν Μαυριανοῖς ἡμαυρωμένον...

⁶⁷ Theophanes wrote a *Chronographia* covering the years down to 813. The work mentioned here is not extant.

⁶⁸ Nikephoros I, Patriarch of Constantinople from 12 April 806 to 13 March 815), author of the *Historia Syntomos* (covering the years 602-769), and of various theological works. He resigned in the face of iconoclast opposition and was exiled from Constantinople on 13 March 815 for the rest of his life; see in general, P. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nikephorus of Constantinople*, esp. pp. 125-135 for his relations with Leo, pp. 147-155 for his exile.

through pierced by thorns and needles⁶⁹). While the Patriarch was being led away, Theophanes the Confessor, who resided at Agros,⁷⁰ went to a beach and offered his reverence to him by lighting candles and burning incense, receiving Nikephoros' blessing in return. He instructed his fellow monks, after they had been informed of these things, to perform the same actions for him when he was departing from the Propontis. When the Patriarch perceived them,⁷¹ he bowed his neck and then raised his hands aloft requesting in the deepest reverence that the petitions of the pious Theophanes meet with every approval. His escorts asked him of whom he spoke, "When you raised your arms in such a manner, O Despot, to whom did you intend to send your ultimate greeting from such a distance?" He replied, "To the holy father and confessor Theophanes of the monastery [13] of Agros, who has honored us with candles and incense." And the prophecy was fulfilled. For not long afterwards Theophanes was excommunicated by the Church along with many others and suffered many evils, thus winning the crown of a Confessor of the Faith.⁷² And he never again saw the Patriarch, as had been foretold. As for Theodotos, unworthily taking over the Patriarchal throne on the day of the life-giving Resurrection of Christ our God,⁷³ he freely held fast to his heresy and infected many with it like a disease.

15. And now the Emperor Leo displayed a youthful vigor in the wars against the Bulgarians and the Agarenoi and was seized by an invincible conceit. He now seemed to all to be even more arrogant and indeed henceforward he turned to cruelty. For both his appearance and behavior were terrible, and he never tried to restrain the harshness, malice, and rashness that lay within him. He went so far as to punish many, even those convicted of petty crimes, by amputating their hands,

⁶⁹ Genesios copied this parenthetical claim from Ignatios, *Vita Nicephori* 164.12-19.

⁷⁰ A monastery on the south coast of the Sea of Marmara (see R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins*, pp. 195-199). Various short *Vitae* of Theophanes have survived which describe his activities there, although none to my knowledge contains an account of the incident related here by Genesios (for references see the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* 1788-1792). The following story contains numerous ambiguities.

⁷¹ According to Skylitzes (16), who used the text of Genesios (see Translator's Introduction 2), this exchange occurred by means of mutual mystical visions that allowed Theophanes and Nikephoros to "see" each other from a distance.

⁷² After refusing to join the iconoclasts, Theophanes was imprisoned in Constantinople for two years and then sent to the island of Samothrace, where he died (see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 74).

⁷³ I.e., Easter Day, 815. Theodotos' election represents a continuation of the policy of appointing laymen (e.g., Tarasios, Nikephoros I) to the Patriarchal throne.

feet, or other vital parts, and he would frequently have the limbs strung up on public display in the streets of the City.⁷⁴ These actions made him detestable to all his subjects. As time passed, his cruel nature refused to be confined to these acts alone, but he also offended against the Holy Faith. For he found an accomplice in his lurking wickedness, a devious man who was the head of the holy men of the palace and who had an outward appearance of genuine piety.⁷⁵ Carefully choosing the right moment, when the saying of Isaiah was read aloud, "To whom can you liken the Lord, and what likeness can you fashion of Him? Did a craftsman make an image of him, or did a goldsmith, having poured the gold, gild him all over, or make some likeness of him?"⁷⁶ and so on, he then said to the Emperor, taking him aside, "Heed those words, O Emperor, and know the truth that the prophet has revealed to us. Adopt this form of worship and do not be impressed by the respect shown to the icons." By saying these words he infected him all the more with the poison of heresy, which caused much harm to those who followed the path of true piety, as he tortured without mercy all who would not obey.

[14] 16. This Emperor Leo, even though he was impious in religious matters, was a highly competent administrator of public affairs. He overlooked nothing that could benefit the State, and after his death even the Patriarch Nikephoros said that the government of the Romans had lost a great provider, even though he was impious. In addition, he was harsh against criminals, but justly so. For instance, at a time specified by custom, when he was leaving the palace, a man approached him and made an accusation, charging that his wife had been abducted by one of the Senators, who had felt himself completely free to keep her at his side with impunity for a long time. "I have taken this matter up with the Eparchos of the City, but nothing has been done to obtain revenge for me." When the Emperor heard these charges, he quickly ordered one of his attendants to arrange a hearing upon his return, at which both the accused and the Eparchos were to face the charges in his presence. And

⁷⁴ Cf. George the Monk 788.6-8. The tyrant Phokas (602-610) used the hippodrome for similar exhibitions (Theophanes 296).

⁷⁵ This is probably a reference to John Morocharzianos (variants of his last name are attested), later known as 'the Grammarian,' who became Patriarch of Constantinople (838-843). Originally an iconodule (see section 4.4 below), before he became Patriarch he was the abbot of the monastery of Sts Sergios and Bakchos (for which see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 451-454).

⁷⁶ Isaiah 40.18 f. Note that Genesios does not offer any arguments against the iconoclast interpretation of the passage.

when the Emperor returned, his orders were carried out. He then readily asked the plaintiff, "What crime was committed against you?" The man repeated his earlier words, while the defendant confessed that the crime could not be disputed and the Eparchos concurred, even though he had done nothing earlier to punish the Senator. The Emperor immediately deprived the Eparchos of his office as he was incapable of administering justice, and he punished the convicted adulterer according to the laws.⁷⁷ He carried out most of his official duties in the Lausiakos, employing the best scribes, to whom he entrusted the copying of his decisions. His generals and magistrates were chosen for their excellent character, especially with regard to their resistance to bribery, and he was himself no less lacking in greed. Nevertheless he was greatly responsible for the resurgence of heresy, and cruelly punished many of the orthodox. He was highly desirous of honor, although he fell out of rhythm when he sang loudly.⁷⁸ This was particularly apparent when psalms were being sung in the church of Pharos, and his throaty croaking was instantly recognizable to passers-by. He would occasionally lead the choir in his loud voice, especially when they were to sing

"Caught and held fast by love for the King of all,
The children despised the impious threats of the tyrant"⁷⁹

[15] Having slipped away from that love, Leo conspicuously brought divine justice upon himself by this hymn, and thus the prophecy was fulfilled.

17. Some time before these events, Michael from Amorion, who had advanced and succeeded because of his bravery, and had therefore been entrusted with the tagma of the Exkoubitoi, was slanderously accused of high treason. After rebutting the charge in many ways, he was sent away by the Emperor to command the aforementioned corps. Yet the Emperor then became envious of him, as some have said, and wanted to put him

⁷⁷ According to the *Ecloga*, the pocket law code issued by Leo III and his son Constantine V, the punishment for adulterers was the cutting off of the nose (17.27).

⁷⁸ This sentence is a contraction of a longer statement, preserved by Skylitzes (18): Leo aspired to be known as a good singer, but the bad quality of his voice frustrated his ambitions. According to Theophanes Continuatus (39) Leo V was a very good singer.

⁷⁹ From *The Festal Menaion*, 25 December, Canticle Seven, Second Canon (p. 279). I have included more of the hymn than is in the text of Genesios to make the passage intelligible, but the syntax of the Greek is complicated enough to discourage me from putting brackets around my additions.

to death.⁸⁰ But God, through means He considered fitting, miraculously protected him and destined him for the throne. However, some have pointed out that the daring of Michael's speech was greater than the boldness which he displayed on every occasion in accordance with his courageous nature. He spoke in a highly inappropriate manner, threatening to depose the Emperor entirely and insulting the Empress by implications of unlawful sexual unions.⁸¹ These words rang in the ears of Leo, and at first he tried to devise clever methods by which to lay to rest the downward turn of events (for he knew that Michael's tongue was shameless and vicious, even though he believed him to be a brave man). But arguments, exhortations, and admonitions had no effect, and Michael held fast to his obscenity. So the Emperor arranged for others to witness his daring words, in the hopes of dampening his audacity and endless talking, but also because he himself wished to be aware of everything that Michael said. He also circumspectly instructed Exaboullos, since he was a sensible and experienced man, and in addition was an intimate acquaintance of his, not to allow Michael to speak out of line, but to warn him hold his silence since he ought to be afraid of threatening the Emperor. But this also did nothing to rectify the situation as Michael continued to behave intemperately on account of his lack of culture. When Michael's behavior was once, twice, and finally many times reported to the Emperor, and he was finally found to be difficult or impossible to cure, Leo ordered Exaboullos in a hand-written letter that henceforth he was to omit to mention absolutely nothing of the things that were said by Michael, but to report everything to him exactly. As the braggart did not restrain himself in the least, Exaboullos immediately revealed to the Emperor [16] that Michael was still acting shamelessly. So on the day before the Incarnation of Christ our God,⁸² scrutiny brought to light the designs against the Emperor, as the latter had made repeated inquiries for this purpose to the bureau of the asekreteis.⁸³ Michael was therefore convicted of high treason, and he openly lay his defense to rest as he had clearly been bested by his accusers. The Emperor ordered some of his bodyguards to seize him by the arms and to take him to the palace baths,

⁸⁰ For the envy of rulers, see Photios, *Letter to Khan Boris of Bulgaria* 51: "envy forces the rulers to consider as adversaries those whom they should use as their helpers in achieving happiness in the life of the people and in public affairs."

⁸¹ For Leo's wife, Theodosia, see section 1.18 below.

⁸² Christmas Day, 820.

⁸³ These were the Imperial secretaries, who kept court documents; see N. Oikonomides, *LPB*, pp. 310-311.

where they were to tie him to a stake and throw him into the furnace to be burned.⁸⁴

18. After the Imperial order was given, the Emperor was eager to witness its execution. But his wife the Empress Theodosia (she was the daughter of the Patrikios and quaestor Arsaber⁸⁵) rushed out without carefully considering the consequences and confronted her husband. She accused him of murder and barbarity, of not fearing God at all in his heart, and of not showing respect for the festive day, as his action would clearly lead him to receive holy communion with bloody hands. She advised him to keep Michael locked up, and to inquire into the plot with more diligence, in order that his fellow conspirators might be revealed and subjected to fitting punishment. After hearing these words the Emperor ordered that the guilty man should be spared immediate punishment, and addressed the following words to his wife. "O woman, you have saved my soul from being judged today, but you may very well deprive me of my life soon. You and our children will witness the outcome." He thus foresaw the future. For the time of his death had been revealed to him by a book of symbols, which contained a riddle in the form of a depiction of a wild lion transfixing through the throat by a sword, flanked on either side by the letters X and Φ, thus indicating that the beastly Leo himself would be killed between Christmas and the feast of the Epiphany.⁸⁶ [17] Not only this, but in a dream sent by God he had learned the name of the man who would kill him. For a short while earlier he had seen the Patriarch Tarasios freely speak some ill-omened words concerning the punishments Leo would suffer because of his evil, and then sternly order a man named Michael to kill him. This man, obeying the command, struck the Emperor to the ground and left him there, half-dead. Awakened and shaking with fear, Leo related all that he had seen to his own wife. At the same time he remembered what the Patrikios Bardanios had told him about the prophecy of the monk of Philomelion, and also the time Michael had put on his clothes and then stepped on the Imperial robe. Therefore he summoned the papias and gave Michael over to him, ordering that the prisoner be confined to the building of the palace janitors. Leo then

⁸⁴ According to the sole manuscript of Genesios, Michael was to be tied to a *monkey* and then thrown into the furnace. This reading makes little sense, and the possibility of textual corruption and different interpretations are discussed by A. Lesmüller-Werner, 'Miscellanea zur Übersetzung des Genesios,' pp. 217-220.

⁸⁵ Arsaber had revolted against Nikephoros I in 808; see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 14.

⁸⁶ The Φῶτα, on 6 January (the day Christ was believed to have been baptized).

placed Michael in chains and wore the key under his own clothing, trusting no one else with it.

19. Around the third hour of the night the Emperor left his bedroom and knocked open⁸⁷ all the doors that led to the chambers of the papias (for he was a strong and robust man). Upon entering he discovered Michael sleeping on the bed of the papias, while the latter slept on the ground next to him. Leaning over Michael, he placed his palm on the sleeping man's chest to determine whether his sleep was troubled or not. He realized that Michael did not feel his touch and marveled at how free from care his sleep was. Shaking his head and suspecting mischief, he left, indicating his anger at the papias by shaking his fist at him. Thus he threatened both men. These events were secretly observed by a young eunuch in Michael's service who recognized the Emperor when he entered the room only by his purple slippers, which he saw from under the bed where he had crawled (for that was where he lay concealed from the Emperor). After the latter's departure, he informed his master Michael, and also the papias, of everything that had transpired. A great fear seized both the papias and Michael when they heard what had happened, and they considered what to do next. Michael pretended that he felt burdened at heart by his sins, and that he wanted to confess them to a priest through one of his followers, the most trusted Theoktistos.⁸⁸ This Theoktistos was later [18] honored by the noble rank of Patrikios, and the Imperial pen was placed under his care (and hence he was called Kanikleios). The guardianship over Michael⁸⁹ was also entrusted to him in recognition of his loyalty. At that time the success of Michael's pretext depended on an Imperial decree and the mischievous plot was set into motion. Michael informed Theoktistos of the details of the attack and the crafty plan for the ambush was secretly conveyed to all the conspirators. Michael also threatened them that he would expose their participation in the plot to the Emperor if they now abandoned the enterprise.

20. After conferring with each other, they devised the following plan. They would enter at night through the Elephantine gate⁹⁰ during the

⁸⁷ Literally, "knocked to the ground."

⁸⁸ This eunuch should not be confused with the Magistros Theoktistos in 1.10.

⁸⁹ Michael III, the son of Theophilos, who was in turn the son of Michael II of Amorion. For Michael III and Theoktistos, see Book 4.

⁹⁰ For this palace gate see R. Janin, *CB*, pp. 168, 324. Its exact location appears to be unknown.

holy service, disguised as priests and with their weapons concealed beneath their robes. They would then turn to the right and attack the Emperor. For according to an ancient custom the priests had to keep vigil throughout the night outside the palace until dawn, the time designated for their entry. Having thus assumed the guise of priests, the conspirators entered following the real priests, but only the latter entered the church, while the former stayed behind, hiding in a dark place, waiting for the chance to attack the Emperor. He arrived at the church while the morning psalm was being chanted, as was the custom. But now the morning light threatened to reveal the ambush, had the daring of the conspirators not inflamed them to achieve victory. For straight-away, and in the passion of the moment, they courageously drew their swords and mistakenly assaulted the leader of the priests, deceived into thinking that he was the Emperor by the clothing he happened to be wearing. For a very harsh winter had set in, and the Emperor wore an upright head-covering similar to the one worn by the leader of the priestly college. Thus it happened that the conspirators first turned against the latter, [19] but he, stunned by the suddenness of the attack, quickly cried out that the other man was the Emperor, and so they now redirected their attack against him. The priest also bared his head and showed his distinctive characteristic (he was bald) to prevent a similarity of headgear from bringing upon himself the cutting edge of a sword. As for Emperor, he sought refuge in a church⁹¹ and took hold of its cross, or, according to others, the chain that supported the censer, as he had no other defensive weapon, thus intending to put up a stand. When his attackers found him they immediately began to chop away at him with their swords while he held the cross with his hands in an attempt to deflect the blows to his body. For this reason, Leo called out to one of his assailants, a man of great proportions, said to be a giant, one and a half times the size of a normal man, invoking that which he held in his hands. But, like the children of Antimachos,⁹² he encountered the implacable countenance of a man who swore to him that he would live no longer. And he immediately brought his sword down on Leo's wrist, severing the hand so that the fragment of the cross that had remained in his grasp was also cut away. Then he cut off Leo's head. At the very same moment, sailors out at sea heard a voice on the wind an-

⁹¹ According to the mid-ninth-century *Acta Graeca SS. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii* 229, Leo was killed in the palatine church of St Stephen, called St Stephen in Daphne. For its location see the map in R. Guiland, *ETCB* (Stephen is Étienne in French) and the discussion by R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 473-474. For a discussion of other places where Leo may have been murdered, see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 53, n. 1.

⁹² Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 11.121 ff.

nouncing that Leo had perished. The following night, and the day after that, they discussed what each of them had heard and realized the truth.

21. After they had killed Leo, the murderers pitilessly deposited his body in the sewage receptacle of the courtyard, where it stayed for a short while. For Michael's fellow conspirators had more pressing matters to attend to, first of all to get him out of jail and to proclaim him sole Emperor to all the people so that he could put in order the most urgent aspects of the situation, as they needed to secure their safety. And this Michael achieved very quickly. After dragging Leo's body through the Skyla, they severely mutilated it and striped it naked in the hippodrome. Hanging it from a harness, they carried it through the streets and then placed it on a boat along with his wife and four children. Their names were Symbatios, who was renamed Constantine at his father's coronation,⁹³ Basil, Gregory, and Theodosios. [20] They were all conveyed to the island of Prote, where the punishment of castration was inflicted upon them.⁹⁴ Theodosios did not survive the operation. Both were accorded the proper funeral rites.

22. Some say that Leo was afflicted by the impious heresy even before he came to the throne. Hence when according to the customs of our pious faith the Patriarch Nikephoros sent some leading priests to ask him to sign a declaration of orthodoxy, he put off doing so until after the majesty of Imperial rule was conferred upon him by the ceremony of coronation.⁹⁵ On the second day of his rule, although he was pressured to subscribe to the Orthodox declaration, he denied, in a way that admitted of no objection, that it conformed to his will in any way.⁹⁶ And he established all his partners in heresy in the palace, lavishing a luxurious life-style on each of them separately.⁹⁷ Among them he included John the

⁹³ By naming his son Constantine, Leo V tried to evoke the power and popularity of the iconoclastic Emperors of the previous century, Leo III (717-741) and his son Constantine V (741-775). Despite the vicious bias of our surviving monastic (and iconodule) sources, they were highly successful and competent rulers. Leo's actions indicate that he was inclined toward the policies of the first iconoclast Emperors from the beginning of his reign, though his intentions were not obvious to contemporaries (cf. Theophanes 502). Later authors understood his intentions (Scriptor Incertus 346, 355; George the Monk 782-783).

⁹⁴ Basil and Gregory are mentioned again in section 4.18 below.

⁹⁵ Leo was crowned in Hagia Sophia on 12 July 813.

⁹⁶ For the various versions of these transactions see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 56-7; D. Turner, 'The Origins and Accession of Leo V (813-820),' pp. 197-200. Genesios has followed the version of Ignatios, *Vita Nicephori* 163-164.

⁹⁷ This is a hostile reference to the learned committee which Leo assembled in the

Grammarians, who was called Iannis because he was opposed to the truth,⁹⁸ employing him as an assistant to promulgate his teaching. The foolish and apostate Emperor assigned to them the task of composing the articles of the new faith. And so, in the second year of his reign, he shamelessly apostatized, just like the son of Kish,⁹⁹ and ordered the destruction of the revered icons. He wrote to all the bishops commanding them to assemble at Byzantium, which was built by Megarians under Byzas and populated by Karystians, Myceneans, Corinthians, and many others from all over Europe,¹⁰⁰ including philosophers and orators. And when the bishops arrived at Pera¹⁰¹ they were not allowed to be greeted by the Patriarch as was the custom, but were escorted to the Emperor, and unwillingly forced to agree with his misguided positions. Those who obeyed were treated with all due kindness, but those who did not were subjected to every kind of torture in return.¹⁰² Leo cared little for Christian practices, and in fact confused them in the peace treaties he made with the Huns, by assigning the performance of our customs to them, [21] and imposing their religious practices upon himself and his subjects.¹⁰³ For these reasons, perhaps, there were earthquakes, horrific plagues, drought, heat waves, and in addition civil strife in both the cities and the entire countryside. These things started at the beginning of his god-forsaken reign and lasted for many years, thus indicating that in a sense even the elements themselves were greatly vexed at his crimes.¹⁰⁴ Such

palace. Its task was to gather passages from the Bible and the Church Fathers that supported iconoclasm, such as Isaiah 40.18 cited above in section 1.15 (for this committee, see P. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nikephoros*, pp. 126-133, 140, 166, 168). The Patriarch Nikephoros also attacked their allegedly luxurious life-styles: see *ibid.* p. 114.

⁹⁸ John, one of the most educated men of his time, was later Patriarch of Constantinople (838-843). Originally he was an iconodule (see section 4.4 below). For John in general, see P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, pp. 135-146.

⁹⁹ Probably Saul; cf. 1 Samuel 9 ff. George the Monk (777) compares Leo V to Saul.

¹⁰⁰ Constantine VII, *De Thematibus* 46.43-45, lists Megarians, Lacedaemonians, and Boiotians; for Byzantine traditions concerning the founding of the City, see G. Dagron, *Constantinople Imaginaire*, c. 2.

¹⁰¹ Also known as Galata, across the Golden Horn to the north of Constantinople.

¹⁰² For Leo's iconoclastic council and anti-iconodule persecution see P. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus*, c. 6.

¹⁰³ The Bulgarians are meant. The claim is copied from Ignatios, *Vita Nicephori* 206-7. Leo was attacked by his enemies "for ratifying the peace amid pagan rituals and having the Bulgars ratify it with Christian rites" (W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 217). Christian diplomats learned early on that they had to respect the heathen beliefs of powerful foreign nations. See, e.g., the sixth-century historian Menander Protector (fr. 6.1.96-98), according to whom the Christian ambassador to Persia called upon the Persian gods to bear witness to the truth of his claims.

¹⁰⁴ Copied from George the Monk 778 and Ignatios, *Vita Nicephori* 207.

then were his impious plans and designs, and because of them the ensuing hardships lasted for a long time.

23. But when he believed that something contributed to the general welfare, he pursued it tirelessly. Accordingly, he revived cities throughout Thrace and all of Macedonia up to the border of the Scythian territory,¹⁰⁵ taking the field at the head of his armies to repel enemy invasions and to repair the damage that they caused as expeditiously as possible.¹⁰⁶

24. As for his ethnicity, he was produced by a mixture of Assyrians and Armenians, as his own ancestors had risen up and committed some murders, and then had to flee and settle in Armenian lands, where they gave birth to this wild beast. Hence he was considered a monster of mixed race.¹⁰⁷ It is said that the Armenians took their name from Armenos,¹⁰⁸ who was from the Thessalian city of Armenion,¹⁰⁹ and had campaigned with Jason. Leo reigned for 7 years and 5 months and madly pitted himself against God Almighty.

¹⁰⁵ I.e., Bulgaria.

¹⁰⁶ For Leo's activities in Thrace see W. Treadgold, 'The Bulgars' Treaty with the Byzantines in 816,' p. 219.

¹⁰⁷ N. Adontz, *Études armeno-byzantines*, pp. 37-39, has shown that Genesios' account of Leo's ancestry is a confused borrowing from George the Monk (780-781), who claims that Leo's ancestors included one of the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib's two sons, who rose up and killed their father and then fled to Armenia; see also the glossary under 'Amalek.'

¹⁰⁸ For this etiology see Strabo 11.14.12-13; Justin 42.2.10-12; Stephen of Byzantium s.v. 'Ἀρμενία.'

¹⁰⁹ To the west of lake Boebe; for a possible Byzantine identification, see J. Koder and F. Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia* (= TIB v. 1), p. 236.

Book 2: Michael II from Amorion (820-829)

[22] 1. In the year 6329, in the fourteenth indiction,¹¹⁰ Michael miraculously and against all expectation went from prison to being proclaimed Emperor. He sat upon the Imperial throne while still bound in chains, and all who happened to be present came and performed proper obeisance before him. Much time passed, and since the key had not been found the chains could not be removed, until John of the family of the Exaboulion, who was Logothetes of the Dromos, revealed to those present that the key was hidden inside the garments of the murdered corpse, and by using it the chains were unfastened.¹¹¹ At the end of the seventh hour, the Emperor Michael, along with those who had committed the crime, went to the Great Church to be honored with the holy ceremony of coronation. Clearly he neither feared the people nor blushed with the fear of God, but rather was emboldened by many occurrences and predictions, especially by the prophecies of a certain Athinganian seer, who had often given proof of his powers to the commander at that time of the Anatolikon theme. He had indicated to him, making a clear prophecy, that Michael and another one of his officers would wear the crown.¹¹² Wherefore the commander paid special attention to these two men, and desired to marry them to his own daughters. With this purpose firmly in mind, when on one occasion the man in charge of the list of dinner guests (whom they call the atriklines¹¹³) entered and showed him the list as was customary, the commander said that he did not want any others to participate in the banquet, but that only those two men should be allowed to share his table. When the latter had been [23] laid, he instructed his daughters to join the group and ordered the men to recline beside them. They were

¹¹⁰ I.e., in 820.

¹¹¹ According to Theophanes Continuatus (41) the chains were broken with a hammer.

¹¹² The Athinganoi were heretics of Anatolia, who seem to have practiced some Jewish customs. During the reign of Michael I (811-813), Leo (as Strategos of the Anatolians) had confiscated their property and exiled them (Theophanes 497). But the prophecy referred to here evidently took place earlier, under the reign of Nikephoros I (802-811). For the sect in general see J. Starr, 'An Eastern Christian Sect: The Athinganoi'; I. Rochow, 'Die Häresie der Athinganer im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert und die Frage ihres Fortlebens.'

¹¹³ From the Latin *a triclinio*. For the imperial atriklines, see N. Oikonomides, *LPB*, pp. 27-29.

struck by the unexpectedness of the honor and refused to take their places. But his mind was set and he put even more pressure on them, in the end persuading them to do so. Much merriment then ensued, and after they had finished eating, the commander offered them his daughters as wives. This request made them swoon, and for a while they declined on the grounds that they were not worthy, especially Michael, because he had sprung from a very poor and quite undistinguished family. But in the end they complied with the demand.¹¹⁴

2. It is said that when Thomas heard of Michael's elevation to the throne he quickly contrived to revolt against him with a large army.¹¹⁵ For the two men had always been opposed to each other, and Michael was hated by the entire army of the Anatolians, and was equally unpopular on account of his native town, in which, as it seems, a great number of Athinganoi dwelt, because of the defect in his speech, and because he was not considered by some to be a brave enough man. Thomas, on the other hand, was loved by all for his courage, and no less for his cheerful disposition and affability. He rivaled Leo in all noble qualities, even though he had Scythian ancestry,¹¹⁶ and was in addition an old man, and had a lame leg. He now seized all the tax-collectors, laid claim in writing to the regular exactions, and by distributing them to the people he assembled a large force to use against Michael. None of those who originated in the east, or in the west itself,¹¹⁷ failed to support him, neither did foreign nations that had come to dwell in the Empire, nor its own natives, nor its neighbors, nor any slaves that hated their masters, nor entire nations, nor all those who rushed to him at various times and followed him, some fighting by land and some by sea. He seemed to be a new Xerxes, although one of the same faith, and therefore all the themes hurried to ally

¹¹⁴ The two men were, of course, the future Emperors Leo V and Michael II (whose wife's name was Thekla). According to W. Treadgold (*BR*, p. 196 and n. 263) the general was probably Bardanes the Turk (whose revolt Genesios has already described in sections 1.6-8). But we know that during his reign, Leo was married to Theodosia, the daughter of Arsaber (see 1.18). Did Leo marry twice?

¹¹⁵ In the winter of 820/1. He was Tourmarch of the Phoiveratoi at this time (see section 1.11 above). P. Lemerle has identified two versions of Thomas' revolt in Genesios, which derive from the uncritical use of two different sources ('Thomas le Slave,' pp. 267-273). The first one begins here, and includes section 2.3. Both versions are full of errors and lies, but the first one seems to be on the whole historical. H. Köpstein subsequently criticized the strong contrast that Lemerle drew between the two versions, and demonstrated that Michael II's propagandistic account is in fact a distorted version of the more historical account ('Zur Erhebung des Thomas,' pp. 70-71).

¹¹⁶ For Thomas' ethnic origins, see section 1.6 above.

¹¹⁷ 'East' and 'west' are always used with reference to Constantinople.

themselves with him along with their Strategoi.¹¹⁸ Only Olbianos, the Strategos of the Armeniakon theme, kept his troops in line by his shrewdness, and also Katakylas, the Strategos of the Opsikion theme, and they both remained loyal to Michael. [24] Thomas' army, then, which had turned against its countrymen, grew so much that the Saracens seized the opportunity to freely plunder all the islands and lands, and would have conquered them utterly, even though afterwards numerous reports circulated among them which made Thomas seem invincible. Hence he attempted to negotiate with them in the following way. He cunningly enticed them, suggesting that he would be satisfied with whatever they desired, as they greatly feared his large force. He therefore sent an embassy to them seeking peace, which was in reality an alliance whose purpose was to overthrow the Emperor. Having thus made a treaty with the Agarenoi, with the concurrence of their leader he was crowned Emperor by the Patriarch Job of Antioch.¹¹⁹ He assembled his famous army, which was composed of Agarenoi, Indians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, Abasians,¹²⁰ Zichians,¹²¹ Iberians,¹²² Kabeirians,¹²³ Slavs, Huns, Vandals, Getai, and all those who had partaken of the abomination of Mani,¹²⁴ as

¹¹⁸ Thomas skillfully catered to the needs and concerns of the provincial population and thus managed to create a great deal of support for his cause; for an analysis of his policies, and the possible social background to his revolt, see H. Köpstein, 'Zur Erhebung des Thomas,' pp. 76-80, 84-85.

¹¹⁹ This account refutes the claim made below in section 2.4 that Thomas was an Arab agent. P. Lemerle completely rejects that notion, but does not rule out the possibility of a peace treaty between the rebel and the Caliphate ('Thomas le Slave,' pp. 287-288). For Thomas' relations with the Muslim power, see also H. Köpstein, 'Zur Erhebung des Thomas,' pp. 73-74. The Caliph of the 'Abbāsids was at this time Ma'mūn (813-833), a son of the great Harūn al-Rashīd.

¹²⁰ Or Abasgians (Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio* 42.108-110, 46.46-48), modern Abchasians. Their land is situated on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, in the north-western corner of modern Georgia (cf. C. Toumanoff, 'Chronology of the Kings of Abasgia and Other Problems,' pp. 73-82). This list of Thomas' supporters is an expanded version of the list contained in Michael II's propagandistic *Epistola* to Louis the Pious.

¹²¹ Zichia was a land situated on the northwestern edge of the Caucasus, on the coast of the Black Sea and to the east of the Straits of Kerch (cf. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio* 42.95-110).

¹²² I.e., K'art'li, the Georgian kingdom on the eastern coast of the Black Sea (for a perspective contemporary to Genesios see Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio* 45-46).

¹²³ Kabeira was the original name of a town in Pontos, which later became Neokaisareia (cf. D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, pp. 180, 1071). For its subsequent history in the Byzantine period, see A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTP*, esp. pp. 107-110. Genesios is using its ancient name to show off his learning (cf. Strabo 12.3.30-31).

¹²⁴ Paulicians, according to S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, p. 39; but P. Lemerle doubts the historicity of this list ('Pauliciens,' p. 83). For the Paulicians see the last note to section 4.13 and also sections 4.31, 34-37.

well as Lazoi,¹²⁵ Alans,¹²⁶ Chaldians,¹²⁷ Armenians, and other peoples of all sorts, and he took control of the entire east. Finally he marched to Thrace and tried to take Byzantium by force by laying siege to it, placing his hopes in his heavy cavalry, infantry rock-throwers, slingers, and countless peltasts. In addition he possessed not a few siege engines. He attacked the land walls with them many times, but was always repelled without having made any gains. The Emperor's son Theophilos resisted his attacks and fought hard against him, but his father Michael would often sally forth and engage in hand-to-hand combat himself. Not knowing what to do, Thomas resorted to naval attacks, as he had amassed a large squadron of ships, but here he likewise met with failure, for his ships were consumed by 'Military Fire.'¹²⁸ Knowledge of this weapon had almost disappeared before these events, but at this time it was discovered in the following way. A certain knowledgeable Egyptian named Kallinikos was the only man who possessed its secret. Outspokenly presenting himself to the Emperor, he said that, if the Emperor so desired, he would fight on his side against Thomas at sea.¹²⁹ He then prepared the substance and distributed it to the admirals.

[25] 3. The wretched man's rebellion lasted for three years,¹³⁰ and had been predicted during the reign of Leo by the following terrible sign. A comet was seen in the sky, having the form of two bright moons that united and then immediately divided again into diverse configurations, from which was formed the outline of a headless man, thus indicating

¹²⁵ Lazika, the ancient Colchis, was the area on the east coast of the Black Sea around the mouth of the Phasis river. For its highly fluid history at this time, see C. Toumanoff in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, v. 4, pt. 1, pp. 603-611.

¹²⁶ The Alans were an Iranian people who lived in the northern Caucasus. For a summary of their relations with Byzantium at this time, see M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025*, pp. 240-241.

¹²⁷ Chaldia was part of the Armeniakon theme at the time of Thomas' revolt. Later it became a theme in its own right. It included the eastern part of Pontos and its capital was the city of Trebizond (cf. A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTP*, pp. 299-318).

¹²⁸ Generally called 'Greek Fire' by modern western scholars, it was a combustible liquid containing petroleum, which was hurled at enemy ships and ignited (see J. F. Haldon and M. Byrne, 'A Possible Solution to the Problem of Greek Fire'). The Byzantines carefully guarded the secrets of its composition and the method of its propulsion.

¹²⁹ Kallinikos is the customary name given to the Egyptian or Syrian who allegedly brought Greek Fire to the Byzantines. According to Theophanes (354) he did so in 673/4. This discrepancy is one of many that prove that Genesios had not read Theophanes' *Chronographia* (cf. Translator's Introduction 3, and P. Lemerle, 'Thomas le Slav,' p. 266, n. 38, 39).

¹³⁰ From winter 820/1 to October 823; for a chronology of the revolt see P. Lemerle, 'Thomas le Slave,' pp. 290-291.

that the headless doctrine of the contentious heretics would again be imposed on the Christians. However, it may also have signified the accursed Thomas, the head and foolish leader of a seditious force composed of such diverse elements.¹³¹ During his rebellion, the following men distinguished themselves by their noble actions: Olbianos, Christopher, who became a Magistros at that time, and whose sons were the Patrikioi Barsakios and Nasar, and Katakylas, who was a cousin of the Emperor Michael himself and was also a Patrikios. We have spoken of these men before.¹³² Thanks to them the venom of the rebellion was dissipated.

4. The following account of Thomas' career is said to be more correct.¹³³ This rebel came from a humble country and a lowly station,¹³⁴ and traveled to the Imperial City of Constantine for the sake of securing the necessities of life. There he attached himself to one of the Patrikioi (this was the Bardanes we mentioned earlier). He was seized by this man for the crime of adultery, which Nikephoros, the Emperor reigning at the time, had enjoined him to commit, as he was envious of Bardanes' nobility of soul. Fleeing his trial for adultery, which he had not actually committed but only attempted, he escaped to Syria. The first thing that he did was to renounce his Christian faith, and then he dwelt there for a long time. After twenty-five years had passed, he spread a false rumor about himself. He claimed to be Constantine, the son of Leo and Irene.¹³⁵ This Constantine, on account of his malicious character, lost his throne as well as his sight, and died shortly afterwards. His body was placed in a tomb on some consecrated ground in the Imperial City.¹³⁶ [26] But this murderous man, who lived among the Saracens, persuaded them with

¹³¹ The description of this comet first occurs in Theophanes (499), who treats it as a sign of the fall of Mesembria to the Bulgarians in 812. But Genesios' version of this sign is taken from George the Monk (777-778), who first transposed it to refer to the revival of iconoclasm and the revolt of Thomas. This fact indicates that Genesios used George, but not Theophanes.

¹³² Genesios has not mentioned Christopher prior to this passage.

¹³³ Here begins Genesios' second version of Thomas' career (comprising most of section 2.4; the first version comprises sections 2.2-3. For a discussion of the two versions, see the first note to section 2.2 above). This one follows the propagandistic slander of Michael II (cf. the latter's *Epistola* to Louis the Pious) and blatantly contradicts, or deliberately distorts, the first on numerous points.

¹³⁴ The claim that Thomas' family was undistinguished was one aspect of Michael's propaganda against him; see H. Köpstein, 'Zur Erhebung des Thomas,' p. 67.

¹³⁵ Constantine VI (780-797), son of Leo IV (775-780) and Irene (797-802), died before 805.

¹³⁶ He was buried in the monastery of the Lady Euphrosyne; see P. Grierson, 'The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337-1042),' pp. 54-55; R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 130-131.

brilliant promises that he would subject the Empire of the Romans to them, if they gave him enough money and a good army for this purpose. And after his requests were granted he immediately marched against the Romans. Because of the gravity of his undertaking, he also adopted as his son some half-barbarous paltry fellow that he found, who, in addition to the idiocy and meanness of his mind, was also afflicted by physical deformity and other such things.¹³⁷ He ordered this man to be called Constantius,¹³⁸ and appointed him commander of some of the Saracen contingents, and then invaded the Roman Empire with him. At this time Leo was Emperor, who was the son of the Patrikios Bardas and whose family was descended from Armenians.¹³⁹ Leo did not consider this attack on the Romans to be worthy of consideration, and he put together a small army on the spur of the moment, entrusted it to a man who was a soldier rather than a general, and sent him out against Thomas.¹⁴⁰ And when the two armies clashed somewhere in the east, the Imperial army was defeated and routed. Unopposed, Thomas overran the entire east and forced the inhabitants to take his side.

5. Shortly thereafter Michael both killed Leo and was elevated to the throne.¹⁴¹ The rebel Thomas, as though his near total control over the provinces did not suffice, took over the entire Roman armada as well, excepting the so-called Imperial fleet.¹⁴² And he built even more ships,

¹³⁷ Following the suggested emendation τῶν τοιούτων.

¹³⁸ In addition to naming his adopted son Constantius, Thomas also claimed to be a Constantine himself (see the two previous notes, and George the Monk 793; Theophanes Continuatus 51). He thus tried to draw upon the enormous power that the memory of the first Byzantine Emperor still exerted (Constantine I's most famous son was Constantius II). For essays on various aspects of this theme, see P. Magdalino, ed., *New Constantines*. P. Lemerle argues that the claim that Thomas passed himself off as Constantine is false ('Thomas le Slave,' p. 284), but the arguments to the contrary of W. Treadgold (*BR*, n. 322) are plausible.

¹³⁹ This false claim was an essential part of Michael II's propaganda (and indeed contradicts Genesios 2.2). Thomas revolted to contest Michael's succession, not Leo's reign (see P. Lemerle, 'Thomas le Slave,' esp. p. 273). For the Bardas mentioned here as the father of Leo, see R. Guillard, 'Patrices de Léon III à Michel II,' pp. 327-328.

¹⁴⁰ According to W. Treadgold (*BR*, p. 229) this man was Olbianos, the Strategos of the Armeniakon theme (and he was sent by Michael II, not Leo V). P. Lemerle ('Thomas le Slave,' pp. 286-287), however, is rightly cautious. The denigrating comment is not in accordance with Genesios' favorable estimation of Olbianos. But Genesios' source for this version of Thomas' revolt may not have given the name of the Imperial commander, and thus Genesios may not have known that the defeated commander was Olbianos.

¹⁴¹ With this sentence ends the second version of the origin of Thomas' revolt in Genesios. What follows is, if not completely reliable, at least not controversial.

¹⁴² Thomas eventually took control the fleet of the Kibyrrhaiotai, numbering 70 ships (according to section 2.12 below). The Imperial fleet was stationed at Constantinople,

some grain and horse transports, some warships, and ordered them to await him at Lesbos. At the same time he took about ten thousand soldiers and gained control of the straits between Sestos and Abydos,¹⁴³ while leaving pseudo-Constantius to guard his rear. This man he adopted as his son and gave him a powerful force with which to control the regions already taken and allowed him to ravage all the rest. At the instigation of demons and prophecies this Constantius predicted to his drinking companions the day on which he would enter the Imperial City in unspeakable glory. But when on the crucial day he joined battle with the troops of Olbianos, [27] his forces quickly broke rank. He fled and was swiftly captured. The brave Olbianos cut off his head and sent it to the Emperor Michael, who in turn forwarded it to his pseudo-father, the rebel Thomas. But Thomas did not relax his demented efforts at all. When the ships arrived from Lesbos, and he had taken command of the horse transports himself, he waited for a moonless night near a beach called Horkosios¹⁴⁴ by the locals and then, unobserved, he crossed over to many places in Thrace. He there found that all of the inhabitants had declared for him, even though the Emperor, when he had learned that the rebel was crossing the straits at Abydos with his ships, had marched against him with a very small force exacting guarantees from all the cities in Thrace that they would remain faithful to him. But all of these cities set little store by their promises and went over to the tyrant whose forces they thus augmented. The Emperor immediately retreated back to the City and prepared it for a siege in whatever way he could, gathering infantry and naval forces from the eastern lands, which had now been relieved of Thomas' tyranny for a short while. He also equipped the ships with 'Military Fire' and extended a chain from the acropolis to the fort of Pera in order to prevent the so-called Keras,¹⁴⁵ which extended along the City, from being raided by the enemy fleet. The apostate now enlisted one

and, according to Constantine VII (*De Ceremoniis* 2.44), numbered 100 ships a century later. For the Byzantine naval forces in the ninth century, see H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, pp. 71-92.

¹⁴³ Abydos was on the Asian shore of the Hellespont, Sestos on the European. The former was one of two ports where ships traveling to and from Constantinople were taxed by the Imperial government (see H. Ahrweiler, 'Fonctionnaires et bureaux maritimes à Byzance,' pp. 239-243).

¹⁴⁴ Located by J. B. Bury on the Asian coast of the Hellespont between Lampsakos and Parion (*ERE*, p. 91, n. 1); for the port that may have existed there, see H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, p. 315, n. 3.

¹⁴⁵ The Golden "Horn," which extended along the north side of the City. For the chain that was used to block the entrance to it, see R. Guiland, 'La chaîne de la Corne d'Or.'

Gregory, who had been a Strategos,¹⁴⁶ but had fallen out of Imperial favor and had fled to the island of Skyros, one of the Cyclades.¹⁴⁷ When Gregory came over to Thomas' side, the latter placed him in charge of a contingent of ten thousand men and sent him ahead as his advance guard against the Imperial City. At the same time he launched a fleet, hoping that it would arrive before the City of Constantine at the same time as Gregory. And this result was achieved quickly, the land and sea forces meeting at the mouth of the river Barbysos, as the drawn chain did not suffice to stop the onrush of the enemy ships.¹⁴⁸ Soon thereafter, Thomas himself arrived at the City with eighty thousand soldiers,¹⁴⁹ having earlier adopted another son, Anastasios by name, in addition to the previous one. This one had lived as a monk for a while, but had returned to the ranks of the laity on account of his bad character. He was a very ugly man, and because of his constant drunkenness he seemed to be from the race of Indians.¹⁵⁰ Due to his great stupidity he was also villainous at heart. Along with Anastasios, Thomas attacked the city employing his entire army, [28] and believed that his mere presence would cause the gates to open for him. Being disappointed in these hopes, and rejected by the insults of the citizens, he encamped before the revered church of the Holy Anargyroi¹⁵¹ and subjected all those who lived on the Thracian side of the Bosporos. He then pressed his attack against the City using countless missiles and engines that catapulted large rocks, hoping to take it from the direction of the region of Blachernai. Hence the Emperor climbed to the roof of the church of the Theotokos and raised his battle standard. He then ordered his son Theophilos to take up the wood of the Cross, which brought victory, and the revered cloak of the Mother of God, and, accompanied by the holy clerics and the rest of the citizens, to walk around the City on the walls chanting a litany and in this way beg for

¹⁴⁶ His full name was Gregory Pterotos, and he was a nephew of Leo V (Theophanes Continuatus 57).

¹⁴⁷ Skyros is today classified with the Sporades, not the Cyclades, but Byzantine administrative convenience dictated otherwise. Skyros was definitely one of the Cyclades: Constantine VII, *De Thematis* 17.22-29. For the administrative use of the word 'Cyclades' by the Byzantines, see H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, pp. 80-81; for maps of Byzantine naval districts in the Aegean, see E. Malamut, *Les îles de l'empire byzantin*, v. 2, pp. 644-645.

¹⁴⁸ The meeting, as described here, took place near the head of the Golden Horn (cf. J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 93, n. 3).

¹⁴⁹ Clearly an exaggerated figure.

¹⁵⁰ For the ugliness of Indians, see also Nikephoros, *Short History* 45.55-56.

¹⁵¹ Sts Kosmas and Damianos were given this title because, unlike doctors, they healed for free. For this particular church see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 286-289. It was located near the modern Eyüp.

divine help.¹⁵² The apostate now fought in every possible way, even by using his siege engines. But from their higher position the Emperor's men repelled the attackers with missiles and counter-devices, so that Thomas' men had to abandon their ladders, *testudo*-formations, battering rams, and all other kinds of equipment, and seek refuge in their own tents. In addition, the naval forces of the apostate, which could also use 'Liquid Fire,' surrounded the City and attacked it with that weapon, along with countless missiles and four-footed siege engines. But since it was winter, they were repelled by a contrary wind.

6. When the end of winter drew near, Thomas used his land and sea forces to assault that part of the City which, on account of its shape, is called Keras.¹⁵³ He had constructed more four-footed siege engines and hoped that the boulders they hurled from the ships would demolish the walls. The Emperor stood on the walls and managed to speak with some of the enemy troops, promising them that they would be pardoned for all they had done if they changed sides now, but he did not persuade them. He then armed a small band of men, and suddenly sallied forth from the City and utterly defeated everyone whom he encountered. The same success was achieved at sea, so that the enemy's ships ran aground and were pushed together, taking refuge with those who were fighting on land, thus giving up the fight at sea. Many of the enemy troops now willingly joined the [29] Emperor. Among them was Gregory, who gathered a small band of soldiers, and, under the cover of night, seized the chance to flee to Thrace and threaten the tyrant's rear.¹⁵⁴ But when the rebel learned of this he immediately marched against Gregory, captured him, and killed him. He then returned to the City and began the siege anew. He forged letters proclaiming his victory on land and sea and, having deceived the navy stationed in Hellas¹⁵⁵ and all the islands, he summoned it to fight against the Emperor. And they even armed grain transports with warriors and eagerly set sail, coming to rest at the shore of the so-called Byrides.¹⁵⁶ In number they were no fewer than before, for their total was now about

¹⁵² Cf. the similar procedure that was used to repel the Russian attack of 860: Photios, *Homily* 4.4.

¹⁵³ I.e., 'Horn.'

¹⁵⁴ According to Theophanes Continuatus (63) Michael held Gregory's wife and children as hostages in the City.

¹⁵⁵ This was a Byzantine theme that encompassed the southeastern lands of mainland Greece.

¹⁵⁶ The exact location of this harbor is uncertain; see R. Janin, *CB*, p. 407; P. Lemerle, 'Thomas le Slave,' p. 276, n. 83.

350. They intended to launch a simultaneous attack against the City from the south and the north. Before they attacked, however, the Emperor managed to send against them fire-bearing ships, which reached the enemy ships where they were anchored and burned some entirely, scattered others, but captured the majority with their crews and led them back to the Emperor.

7. When Mortagon¹⁵⁷ the lord of Bulgaria heard about all that was taking place around the Imperial City, he sent ambassadors to the Emperor seeking to make an alliance with him. A thirty year treaty between the Romans and the Bulgarians had been agreed upon under the Emperor Leo,¹⁵⁸ and almost ten of those years had elapsed. The Emperor judged their offer to be worthy of welcome acceptance, but nevertheless declined it because he did not wish the civil war to provide occasion for the Bulgarians to shed Christian blood, something they had been prevented from doing by the excellent provisions of the long-standing treaty. Treating the emissaries kindly in return for their willingness to help, he sent them back to their own country. But the Bulgarians entirely ignored the words of the Emperor and marched against the tyrant, invading Roman territory and encamping in the region called Kedouktou.¹⁵⁹ When the apostate learned of the attack of the Bulgarians against himself, he lost all interest in his remaining naval forces, which now went over entirely to the Emperor. He gathered his entire land army, raised the siege, and, attacking the Bulgarians at the aforementioned place, was utterly [30] defeated.¹⁶⁰ Most of his men were killed and burned by the Bulgarians. The remainder fled in any way they could. Laden by the booty taken from their enemies, the Bulgarians departed for home.

8. But even after this setback the tyrant still did not halt his mad designs. Instead, he gathered his scattered forces at a place called Diabasis,¹⁶¹ since it offered many advantages to an encamped army, being

¹⁵⁷ Properly Omurtag, Bulgarian Khan (814/5-831), the son of Krum.

¹⁵⁸ Probably in 816 (see W. Treadgold, 'The Bulgars' Treaty with the Byzantines in 816').

¹⁵⁹ The Bulgarians in fact came to the rescue of Michael II, probably at the latter's explicit request (George the Monk 796; cf. P. Lemerle, 'Thomas le Slave,' pp. 280-281). "Kedouktou," near Herakleia (ancient Perinthos), a city on the north coast of the Sea of Marmara, is a corruption of the Latin word 'aqueduct' (cf. A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, p. 42, n. 1).

¹⁶⁰ Thomas may have won this battle, though with heavy casualties (George the Monk 796-7; cf. P. Lemerle, 'Thomas le Slave,' pp. 280-281).

¹⁶¹ I.e., 'The Pass,' about 30 miles west of Constantinople.

both highly suitable for the grazing of horses and catering bountifully to the necessities of men. He was confident that the marshes there would protect his camp, and, as though from a citadel and acting like a true tyrant, he made frequent raids upon the nearby villages which he also burned. When news of these actions reached the Emperor Michael, he assembled as large an army as he could¹⁶² and, marching out against the tyrant in an orderly manner, he reached the aforementioned place. He raised the morale of his soldiers with speeches and other promises. The tyrant at first opposed the Emperor with a sizable force, but then pretended to flee in order to break the good formation of the Imperial forces. But he utterly failed in this attempt, neither breaking the order of the Imperial army nor managing to keep his own army in formation, so that when the enemy soldiers charged he could not withstand them but fled to Arkadiopolis¹⁶³ as fast as he could with some of his soldiers. The Emperor meanwhile came to terms with most of the rebel soldiers and enlisted them in his own army. He then marched to the city where the rebel himself had taken refuge, and surrounded it with a strong circular palisade. The apostate had a very small cavalry force in the city, but he sent it out often whenever he noticed that his opponents were in disorder. But the poor wretches suffered far more damage than they inflicted on the enemy. The Emperor did not employ siege-engines against the city, as he feared that in this way more of his co-religionists would be killed by the sword and that the Scythians would learn how Roman cities could be taken with siege instruments.¹⁶⁴ [31] He decided to make the tyrant's forces suffer from famine and lack of supplies. And indeed after a long time the tyrant was so distressed by the utter lack of necessities that he expelled from the city all who were unfit to fight on account of their age and general condition, and convinced his followers to eat the meat of the horses, which had by now died of hunger and were even beginning to smell. They reached the point of having to eat sheepskins and leather. In the end some of them escaped through the city gates, others used ropes to climb down the walls, while others simply threw themselves to the ground, breaking their limbs. These deserters swore allegiance to the Emperor, and were forgiven, but then seized the chance to join the forces of

¹⁶² Some editors emend the passage to read 'not a large army'; but George the Monk 797 (whom Genesisios used) and Theophanes Continuatus 67 (who generally used the same sources as Genesisios) say that Michael marched out with a large army.

¹⁶³ Founded on the site of ancient Bergoule, roughly midway between Constantinople and Adrianople.

¹⁶⁴ Probably the Bulgarians are meant, although they already knew how to build and operate effective siege engines.

Anastasios, the false son of Thomas, who had occupied the town of Byzē¹⁶⁵ and had decided to fight against the Emperor from there with the soldiers that came to him. His purpose was to offer the apostate an avenue of escape while the fighting was going on. But the Emperor negotiated with the men in the city and swore an oath to grant an amnesty for all the crimes that they had committed against him. They now rose up against the tyrant, arrested him, and took him before the Emperor. Rejoicing, Michael stepped upon Thomas' neck and ordered that both his arms and legs be cut off, and, in addition, that he be impaled.¹⁶⁶ While the sentence was being carried out the wretch cried out loudly, "Spare me, you who are the true Emperor." The Emperor asked him whether others had secretly participated in his rebellion, and Thomas was about to falsely name many of the Emperor's friends and supporters, when John, who was surnamed Exaboulis and was one of the Patrikioi, stopped him from speaking, telling the Emperor that it was not right to heed the advice of enemies when it was directed against one's friends. Such, then, was the unfortunate death of the tyrant, which took place in mid-October.¹⁶⁷ Immediately thereafter, Anastasios was seized by his own followers in Byzē when they learned of Thomas' death. He was bound hand and foot and led to the Emperor who inflicted upon him the same punishment that his so-called father had suffered.

9. Some of the tyrant's soldiers had seized the city of Panion¹⁶⁸ and, even though their master had been destroyed, they had decided to continue the fight against the Emperor. The latter arrived at this city, but his conciliatory words in no way convinced them to surrender their arms. Then a God-sent sign occurred. A powerful earthquake demolished the walls allowing the Emperor's men to enter the city. This was interpreted by those who study earthquakes as a sign of the defeat of the rebels, a sign which indeed caused the defeat.¹⁶⁹ But [32] Herakleia, formerly called Perinthos,¹⁷⁰ which was grievously infected with the tyrant's disease, also refused to accept the healing offered by the peaceful words of the Emperor. An attack on the seaward side of the walls by the Imperial

¹⁶⁵ Or Bizye, roughly 30 miles northeast of Arkadiopolis (for Bizye, see A. Pralong, 'Remarques sur les fortifications byzantines de Thrace orientale,' pp. 192-198).

¹⁶⁶ For the history and significance of these ritual acts which signified Thomas' defeat, see M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 144-146.

¹⁶⁷ Of 823.

¹⁶⁸ An ancient city on the north coast of the Sea of Marmara.

¹⁶⁹ A bit of sarcasm on Genesios part?

¹⁷⁰ An ancient city on the north coast of the Sea of Marmara.

troops took the city and rid it of the tyrannical disease. This happened without the spilling of blood,¹⁷¹ just as when the tyrant's forces had taken it in the first place. The Emperor, having reduced all to obedience, now returned to the Imperial City where he organized contests of horsemanship. He did not harm the captured rebels but only made them walk down the middle of the hippodrome with their hands tied behind their backs, and immediately exiled some of them. In this manner he celebrated his triumph.

10. While Thomas' rebellion was raging, Agarenoi from Spain plundered Roman possessions with impunity, using ten curved ships (or, according to others, twenty). This happened in the following manner. They had grown tired of their own land as it was neither very prosperous nor fertile, and said to their leader Apochaps,¹⁷² "Take us away from here and lead us to a fertile land, and let us live a better life there." Moved by their words, he equipped a fleet with brave and well-armed men and conquered all the islands, even Crete itself. Invading that island with his light troops, he took many prisoners and carried away much plunder. Having become familiar with the lay of the land he returned home. On the next occasion, having built and equipped forty ships, Apochaps sailed out against Crete, approached its peninsula, and anchored his fleet at Charax.¹⁷³ He then arranged his forces, stationing twenty men on each ship, and allowing the rest to plunder the island for twelve days. Then, when the bulk of his forces had departed, he set fire to his ships and utterly destroyed them.¹⁷⁴ When they returned and found their ships burned to ashes, they dared to rebel against their leader. But [33] he justified his action to them, saying, "Only a short while ago, my compatriots, you were grumbling that I was unwilling to lead you to a better land and a better life. For this reason I brought you here, where milk and honey flow

¹⁷¹ I.e., the rebel garrison surrendered.

¹⁷² Properly Abū Hafṣ. He and his followers had been exiled from Spain, and after some adventures in Egypt, moved on to Crete. Various dates have been proposed for the final move of these Arabs to Crete: E. W. Brooks suggested 828 ('The Arab Occupation of Crete,' pp. 430-431; followed by W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 251 and n. 347), A. Vasiliev et al. preferred 827 (*BA*, v. 1, pp. 54-55, 56, n. 1), while V. Christides (*The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs*, p. 85-88) suggested c. 824. For a summary of all other proposals see B. Kalaitzakes, *Ἡ Κρήνη καὶ οἱ Σαρακηνοί*, pp. 36-40.

¹⁷³ Possibly Suda Bay, in northwestern Crete, or else near Matala on the south coast of the island. See the discussion and bibliography in *ibid.* pp. 40-1.

¹⁷⁴ E. W. Brooks rightly argues against the historicity of this action ('The Arab Occupation of Crete,' pp. 432-433).

freely.”¹⁷⁵ But they replied, “And how are we to find our wives and children?” He said to them, “You know that you have taken many captives. Choose your wives from among them.” These words pleased them, and they ended their rebellion. They built a wall of densely packed pointed stakes to protect themselves and lived within its confines. And from that day onward that place has been known as Charax.¹⁷⁶ A monk who later traveled to the island told them, “If you wish to rule over the entire island, follow me. I will endeavor to point out to you the best location to build, and there you should construct a city, from where you can rule the entire island.” And so he took them to a place called Chandax, where their new city was built and surrounded by a moat.¹⁷⁷ Apochaps ruled from there and enslaved twenty-nine Cretan cities. Only one was not actually conquered but rather made a treaty with him, and has remained independent up to this day, as is attested by its name. Its inhabitants have remained free to practice the Christian religion.¹⁷⁸ It man responsible for this invasion and the loss of the cities was Thomas. Now Apochaps had a son, Saipes,¹⁷⁹ whose son in turn was Babel,¹⁸⁰ who, in the days of the blessed Emperor Leo,¹⁸¹ landed in the Peloponnese with his ship as a result of a storm. There he was defeated by the local Strategos, the prudent Constantine, who was called Tessarakontapechys.¹⁸² Zerkounes, the brother of Babel, ruled Crete and was the predecessor of the current ruler.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁵ The editors A. Lesmüller-Werner and I. Thurn suggest a conflation of Homer, *Odyssey* 9.359 and Exodus 3.8 for this image.

¹⁷⁶ I.e., ‘palisade,’ or ‘fort wall.’

¹⁷⁷ Later Candia, modern Herakleion. Genesios has split the founding of Chandax (i.e., Candia) into two events, and has the Arabs first build a temporary fort (which he calls ‘Charax’) on the peninsula where they landed, then move on to found the city of ‘Chandax’ (cf. Theophanes Continuatus 75-76, who simply names the peninsula ‘Charax’ and the city ‘Chandax’). Genesios has probably tried to give an etiology for the name of the peninsula and thus transferred to it the first stages of the building of Chandax, which involved the making of a wooden palisade.

¹⁷⁸ For discussions and conjectures concerning this city see B. Kalaitzakes, ‘*Ἡ Κρήτη καὶ οἱ Σαρακηνοί*’, pp. 49-50, and D. Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete*, p. 34. Eleutherna seems to match the description given by Genesios.

¹⁷⁹ Properly Shu‘ayb (see the discussion in the Translator’s Introduction 1). For a speculative list of the Arab rulers of Crete, see the article by M. Canard, ‘Ikritish’ (the Arabic name for Crete) in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 3, p. 1085 = B. Kalaitzakes, ‘*Ἡ Κρήτη καὶ οἱ Σαρακηνοί*’, pp. 150-1, with the corrections of G. Miles, *The Coinage of the Arab Amirs of Crete*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁰ Possibly Abū-‘Abdullāh (see the discussion in the Translator’s Introduction 1).

¹⁸¹ Leo VI (886-912).

¹⁸² The name means ‘he who stands four cubits tall’ (i.e., about six and a half modern feet). This was not a personal nick-name but the proper surname of a family related to the

11. On this island the admirable Cyril, the Bishop of the city of Gortyna, was slaughtered like an unblemished sacrificial lamb for his faith in Christ.¹⁸⁴ Some say that his precious blood has been preserved intact until the present time in a certain location. Pious pilgrims to this place wipe some away with a sponge [34] and draw from it a holy myrrh, without changing the color of the blood.¹⁸⁵ Besides, buried there among many others are also the seven pious foster-children of the island, all of whom were killed because of their unhesitant and genuine faith in Christ.

12. Henceforth the islands would have been under Agarene control, had the Emperor Michael from Amorion not exerted himself to assure their freedom.¹⁸⁶ Continually paying attention to this matter, he authorized Krateros, the Strategos of the Kibyrrhaiotai,¹⁸⁷ to prepare all the ships under his command and to sail to Crete where he was to make every effort to wipe out all the settler Saracens. Reaching Crete with seventy ships, he engaged them in a battle that lasted from dawn until dusk.¹⁸⁸ His victory was so overwhelming that he planned to kill all of the Saracens. But his stupid commanders prevented him from carrying out his design by giving him the following bad advice. "We have caused them enough grief, and they will no longer dare to challenge us henceforth.

"Night darkens now. It is good to give way to the night time"

Empress Irene; Theophanes 474, 476: a Constantine, a Theophylaktos, and a Leo with that name are attested during her reign. Genesios is our only source for this incident (cf. A. Bon, *Le Péloponnèse byzantin*, pp. 77, 187).

¹⁸³ For the significance of this statement for dating the first version of the work of Genesios see the Translator's Introduction 1.

¹⁸⁴ The city is in the south of Crete. The martyrdoms are probably fictitious, this Cyril being confused with a martyr who suffered during the persecution of the Roman Emperor Decius (249-251); see C. de Boor, 'Ein falscher Bischof,' and I. Papadopoulos, 'Υπάρχει καὶ δεύτερος ἅγιος Κύριλλος Γορτύνης.'

¹⁸⁵ For the origin of the belief in the miraculous powers of the blood of saints and martyrs, see R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, pp. 131-132, and 232-233, n. 99.

¹⁸⁶ This statement probably refers to islands other than Crete, for otherwise the following narrative would contradict it. For the history of the Byzantine islands during this period, see E. Malamut, *Les îles de l'empire byzantin*.

¹⁸⁷ This was the most important naval theme, comprising southwestern Asia Minor. But before this expedition Michael had sent another under the command of Photinos which had ended in disaster (Theophanes Continuatus 76-77).

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Psalm 112.3.

as the poet says.¹⁸⁹ For our people are exhausted. Let us then go to our tents and with the morning light we can return to deal with them." Deceived by their words, he retired with them to the tents. However, they took no safety precautions, but were negligently and unfortunately lulled to sleep by their great weariness. They slept the sleep of death, until the enemy came upon them at night and gave them a sleep of steel.¹⁹⁰ Not one of all the Tourmarchs or military commanders who were present managed to get on board a warship, only the Strategos himself boarded a merchant vessel and sailed away. When the leader of the Agarenoi learned of his escape, he sent some of his men to pursue him in two ships, and they caught up with him near the island of Kos (what a disaster!) and there crucified him. And from that day onward up this very day the island of Crete is held by the Agarenoi, from where they raid Roman territory.

[35] 13. Then a very intelligent and prudent man emerged, whose surname was Ooryphas, and acting on his advice, the Emperor ordered a superb naval force to be assembled. Each of the sailors was given forty gold nomismata,¹⁹¹ and they declared that otherwise nothing could be done, that is, if they were not given that much money. Embarking upon well-armed ships and under the command of this man they secured freedom for many of the islands. From the sum that they were paid, these men were named the tessarakontarioi.¹⁹²

14. At the beginning of his reign the Emperor Michael was an utterly uncultured lout rather than an adornment to his Imperial position,¹⁹³ but concerning the divine images, he allowed everyone to act and believe as they saw fit.¹⁹⁴ Later he began to lose his reason, and became two-faced. He took as his wife Euphrosyne, the daughter of the Constantine who had been condemned and blinded,¹⁹⁵ and even though she had espoused the monastic life, he took her to the palace and married her. Similarly, he

¹⁸⁹ Homer, *Iliad* 7.282, 293.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Psalm 12.4.

¹⁹¹ More than six years worth of regular pay, according to W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 257; cf. also *idem*, 'The Army in the Works of Constantine Porphyrogenitus,' pp. 92, 111-112.

¹⁹² I.e., 'Fortyers.' E. W. Brooks dates their activities to the reign of Theophilos ('The Arab Occupation of Crete,' pp. 433-434).

¹⁹³ I.e., his Greek was poor.

¹⁹⁴ According to the *Acta Graeca SS. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii* 230, he said "Let each do what seems right to him."

¹⁹⁵ Constantine VI (780-797).

unfairly punished the holy Methodios¹⁹⁶ by imprisoning him on the island of Andreas the Apostle, which lies near the Akritas.¹⁹⁷ He thus desired to suppress Methodios' opposition.¹⁹⁸ Theophilos cruelly killed Euthymios, the Metropolitan Bishop of Sardis, with a bull-whip.¹⁹⁹

15. Michael ruled for eight years and nine months, and died when he succumbed to a disease of the kidneys that caused him difficulty in urinating.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Later Patriarch of Constantinople (843-47) and saint. A Sicilian, he was imprisoned in 821 for his connections with iconodule circles and released in 829 just before Michael II died. After the death of Theophilos he played a leading role in the restoration of the images (see sections 4.3, 4.5 below). A short *Vita* of Methodios survives.

¹⁹⁷ The island was located to the north of the promontory of Akritas (modern Tuzla-burnu), across the straits of the Bosphoros (see R. Janin, *CB*, pp. 445-446 and map 14).

¹⁹⁸ Literally, "to burn him up," but Genesisios "*saepe aliud quam vult dicit*" (S. Bergler, in the *PG* 109 edition, col. 1052, n. 39).

¹⁹⁹ Euthymios was killed on the island of St Andrew in 831 (i.e., in the reign of Theophilos; see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 139, n. 3; the date was established by J. Gouillard, 'Une oeuvre inédite du Patriarche Méthode: La Vie d'Euthyme de Sardes,' p. 40 f.). Euthymios was suspected of treason, and therefore, strictly speaking, he was not punished for his iconodule beliefs (*ibid.* 39 f.). See now the translated *Vie d'Euthyme de Sardes* by Methodios, his cell-mate.

²⁰⁰ This concluding sentence seems copied from George the Monk 792.8-9. Michael II died on 2 October 829 (P. Grierson, 'The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337-1042),' p. 56).

Translator's Note: Theophobos and Manuel

The information contained in the following pages is essential for any understanding of Book 3 of Genesios (and a few sections of Book 4). I have therefore decided to bring it to the attention of the reader by interrupting the narrative, rather than confine it to an Appendix. Those readers who are familiar with the historical issues can skip this section, which contains no new arguments. But all others are urged to read it before proceeding to the highly confused narrative of Genesios. Except for Theophilos' accession and death, the sections of Book 3 are arranged with an absolute disregard for chronology, and many of the stories are completely fictitious.

1. Book 3 of Genesios is less about Theophilos than about his two generals Theophobos and Manuel, whose careers present major historical problems. Henri Grégoire established that Theophobos was the Greek name adopted by the Khurramite rebel Naşr when he and his followers found refuge in the Empire in 834 and converted to Christianity.²⁰¹ Members of the Khurramite religious sect (called 'Persians' by Genesios and the Byzantines) had revolted against the authority of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate in Azerbaijan. As early as 816/7 they were under the leadership of a man named Bābak.²⁰² Naşr is variously seen as a lieutenant of Bābak, or as an independent Khurramite rebel.²⁰³ In late 833 the forces of the Caliph Mu'taşim inflicted defeats upon both rebels, and as a consequence Naşr and fourteen thousand of his men migrated to the Byzantine Empire. Theophilos organized them into *tourmai* of their own and settled them in the themes of the Empire. When called up for service, they united into one force under the command of the newly-christened Theophobos.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ 'Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' pp. 186-188.

²⁰² For a summary of these events, see H. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 170 ff.; for the Khurramite (properly Khurramiyya) beliefs and history see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 5, pp. 63-65.

²⁰³ Cf. M. Rekaya, 'Mise au point sur Théophobe et l'alliance de Bâbek avec Théophile,' p. 49 ff. and W. Treadgold, *BR*, n. 388.

²⁰⁴ The details of the settlement can be found in W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 282-283; for the military actions of the Khurramites on behalf of the Empire, see H. Bartikian, 'Οἱ "Βυζαντινοὶ" Χουρραμίτες καὶ ἡ Ἀρμενία.'

These events are mentioned, or alluded to, in *Genesios* 3.3-4.

2. In 837 the forces of the Caliphate were massed under the command of the general Afshīn against the rebel Bābak. In desperation the Khurramite leader informed Theophilos of his plight and requested help. The Emperor seized this opportunity and, while the Arab forces were busy suppressing the Khurramites, launched a successful invasion into enemy territory. His forces plundered many cities and butchered their inhabitants. The Byzantine invasion forces included the new 'Persian' corps under Theophobos, but Theophilos did nothing to help Bābak, who was defeated, captured, and later savagely executed by the Arabs. There had, after all, never been an alliance between the two enemies of the Caliphate.²⁰⁵ Many of Bābak's followers migrated into the Empire after his final defeat, and Theophilos' Persian corps was thus augmented by another sixteen thousand Khurramites.²⁰⁶

The Byzantine expedition is described in *Genesios* 3.11, 3.13. The subsequent migration of the followers of Bābak is alluded to in 3.6.

3. The Byzantine invasion enraged the Caliph Mu'taṣim, who organized a massive assault into Asia Minor in 838. He divided his army into two parts. The smaller contingent, under the command of Afshīn, inflicted a disastrous defeat upon Theophilos and his army at Dazimon (also called 'Anze' by *Genesios*) in the Armeniakon theme on 22 July.²⁰⁷ The Emperor was saved from capture and even death after the majority of his army had fled. Grégoire, based on an Arab source, believed that it was Theophobos who had saved the Emperor.²⁰⁸ However, Warren Treadgold has convincingly argued that it was Manuel instead.²⁰⁹

Grégoire demonstrated that both Manuel and Theophobos became figures of legend after their deaths, but before *Genesios* wrote his history. The latter was confronted by hagiographic accounts of their lives that magnified their military exploits and cast them as protectors of the holy icons. These legends thus tended to denigrate and distort the memory of Theophilos, who was in fact a convinced iconoclast.

²⁰⁵ M. Rekaya, 'Mise au point sur Théophobe et l'alliance de Bābek avec Théophile,' pp. 56-60; cf. also J. Rosser, 'Theophilos' Khurramite Policy and its Finale: The Revolt of Theophobos' Persian Troops in 838.'

²⁰⁶ W. Treadgold, *BR*, n. 403.

²⁰⁷ For the Arab invasion in general see A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, pp. 144-177; W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 298-305.

²⁰⁸ 'Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' pp. 188-191.

²⁰⁹ 'The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845,' pp. 180-182. Manuel's noble deed was praised by Montaigne (*Essays* 1.18) -- one of the very few incidents from Byzantine history mentioned by the French thinker.

But the transmission of events through hagiographic texts garbled their chronology and significance. Hence in Book 3 Genesios has two separate accounts of the battle of Dazimon (3.9, 3.14), which he evidently believed were different battles. And whereas Manuel died of his wounds five days after the battle of Dazimon, the hagiographic tradition that preserved his memory managed to extend his life into the reign of Michael III. He then allegedly participated in the restoration of the images and saved Michael III at another battle of Dazimon (described by Genesios in 4.14).²¹⁰ All this is complete fabrication, as is much else that the reader will encounter in the following pages.

The proper chronological sequence of the sections of Book 3 is as follows: 1 (Theophilos' accession); the end of 9 (the flight of Manuel); 10 (John's embassy); 17 (Manuel in Syria and his return); 3-4 (garbled traditions concerning Bābak and the first migration of Khurramites); first half of 2, first third of 11, and first lines of 13 (Theophilos' invasion of 837); second third of 11 and end of 13 (Mu'taṣim's invasion of 838); second half of 2, 9 and 14 (battle of Dazimon); final third of 11 and 12 (siege of Amorion and its aftermath); 15 (plots in Constantinople); 5-6 and 8 (Khurramite revolt and its aftermath); 16 (embassy to Louis the Pious); 7 and 18 (Theophilos' death and the execution of Theophobos).

²¹⁰ See H. Grégoire, 'Études sur le Neuvième Siècle,' pp. 520-524; W. Treadgold, 'The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845,' pp. 182-183; but this theory has been questioned: A. Christophilopoulou, 'Η Ἀντιβασιλεία εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον,' pp. 34-40; and C. Mango, 'The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photius,' p. 134, n. 7. The problem of Manuel requires more attention.

Book 3: Theophilos (829-842), the son of Michael II

[36] 1. Theophilos inherited the throne from his father in the year 6338, in the eighth indiction.²¹¹ He called for a silention²¹² in the Magnaura, urging all to attend with one accord. Standing in the middle, he spoke the following words. "Since my father your Emperor, O Holy Senate, bound me with fearsome oaths as he departed from this life to reward in a fitting manner those who rebelled with him against Leo for the danger they incurred, I do not intend in any way to neglect his command." Then, when they spoke openly of their deed before the Emperor and the Senate, he gave an explicit order to the Eparchos, "Rise up and inflict upon them whatever the law decrees for those who do not dread to commit murder. Besides, they even turned against the Emperor himself, who receives his reign by the grace of God." And his command was immediately carried out.²¹³

2. Having gained control of the reins of power, Theophilos hastened with all his strength to make war on the Agarenoi, being confident in the number of his men and the quality of his chosen officers. For he had with him the noble Armenian Manuel, the fame of whose bravery was widespread throughout all of Syria and the Roman territories,²¹⁴ and whose piety was even greater, as [37] events would prove.²¹⁵ He also had with him Theophobos, a man of Persian descent, who was pious, and well en-

²¹¹ I.e., 829. Theophilos had been crowned co-Emperor as early as 821. He was approximately sixteen years old when his father died (see W. Treadgold, 'The Problem of the Marriage of the Emperor Theophilos,' pp. 337-338).

²¹² This term refers to a ceremonial gathering of Senators and high ranking dignitaries; see A. Christophilopoulou, 'ΣΙΑΕΝΤΙΟΝ.'

²¹³ Other sources place this incident in the hippodrome; see W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 271 and n. 376. But Theoktistos, who along with Michael II had organized the murder of Leo V (see 1.19 above), prospered during the reign of Theophilos (see, e.g., 3.15), and later wielded much power under, or over, Michael III (see Book 4).

²¹⁴ This is a reference to Manuel's military activities in the service of the Caliphate, for which see sections 3.9-10, 3.14, 3.17.

²¹⁵ A reference to Manuel's alleged participation in the restoration of icons in 842-3 (cf. 4.2). Note that even according to Genesios' legendary account Manuel did not convert to the iconoclast cause until after the death of Theophilos.

dowed with manly eloquence of the traditional kind. Theophilos was thus similar to Moses, who was accompanied by the brave men Joshua, the son of Nun, and Kaleb, even though the Emperor, on account of our piety,²¹⁶ did not treat them in a way pleasing to God.²¹⁷ With them at his side he sometimes defeated the Agarenoi, and sometimes withstood defeat, but all of these things happened in accordance with the unspeakable designs of God, who directs everything wisely. So when on one occasion the Agarenoi were victorious over the Emperor, since victory lies "at the knees of God," as the poet says,²¹⁸ Theophilos barely managed to escape thanks to them, even though many of the Persians defected to the Agarenoi on account of the defeats²¹⁹ (but they would return to their proper master, whenever he marched in person against the enemy, not least because of their love for Theophobos).

3. This account of Theophobos differs entirely in some respects from other traditions, according to the manner in which each historian is accustomed to search for the truth. As worldly affairs are in every way unstable and unpredictable, it happens that nations decline for various reasons and are dispersed throughout the world. So too the Persians, who formerly dwelled in tents and wrapped themselves with leather (thus indicating either their poverty or their bravery), later managed to conquer many people through their courage.²²⁰ But their prosperity made them drunk with power, and along with this came their misfortunes and dispersal, as had happened to the Jews and to other nations. It had been a custom of the Persians that their own kings should come from one royal tribe. But repeated wars, and other misfortunes due to civil strife, led to a lapse in the royal succession in the fatherland. They were now not sure what to do in this matter and were anxious to conduct a search.²²¹ They were informed by a man who had served under one of the members of the royal

²¹⁶ For the alleged iconodule piety of Manuel and Theophobos see Translator's Note 3, which precedes the beginning of the Book 3.

²¹⁷ θεοφιλῶς: a pun on Theophilos' name. The sentence refers to his iconoclast beliefs.

²¹⁸ Homer, *Iliad* 17.514, *Odyssey* 1.267. The poet actually says "at the knees of the gods." The quote is also used, in a similar context, by Prokopios, *History of the Wars* 3.10.13.

²¹⁹ This is Genesios' first reference to the battle of Dazimon, which took place on 22 July 838 (see Translator's Note 3 and cf. 3.9, 3.14).

²²⁰ It seems that Genesios, or his source, has ascribed to the Khurramites the little that he knows of the ancient Persians. For the Persians living in tents see Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 2.1.25-29, 2.2.11, 4.5.2-4 (and *passim*).

²²¹ The following story is pure legend.

family who had often traveled to the City of Constantine as an ambassador, that he had found there the one they were looking for, who although not sprung from a licit union, was nevertheless still a son of that ambassador. Hence some Persians infiltrated the City under orders to secretly locate [38] this youth, whom they eventually recognized (for he lived with his mother in the region of the Oxeia, which lay across and above the Bosphoros and the Horn of Byze,²²² the daughter of Byzas) not only because of his incidental external characteristics, but also because of his innate character, and the condition and disposition of his mind and soul, which showed a harmony of nobility, royalty, and dignity. In addition, discussions with his neighbors confirmed the truth of the identification. As knowledge of this youth had soon reached even the Imperial ears, the Persians in the City agreed that, for that reason, it was necessary for the Persian nation to send ambassadors to the Romans, and they came to arrange a final treaty of peaceful subjection to them. When these things were heard by the Persians back home, both from those who had returned from the mission to the City and from those who were allying themselves with the Emperor on account of Theophobos, they reasoned that they should leave their own land, migrate, and enter the Roman Empire in order to find a ruler of their own kind,²²³ especially since Babek, the leader of the Persians, had precipitated a five-year revolt against the Caliph. In that time the greatest wars had occurred and Babek had been defeated.²²⁴ He thus took seven thousand soldiers and entered Roman territory, searching for Theophobos' father at Sinope, a man very much respected by the Persians, who had by now become a Roman subject.²²⁵ Finding him, Babek received pledges from the Emperor and offered in

²²² The Oxeian quarter was located in the City near the northern end of the portico of Maurianos, across from the Galata (see R. Janin, *CB*, pp. 370-371 and map). Near it was most probably situated the monastery of Theophobia, which created the legends about Theophobos, according to H. Grégoire ('Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' p. 195 f.; for the monastery, see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 245-246). In other words, the monks invented a legend according to which their patron grew up in the region in which their own monastery was located. It is quite possible, however, that the monastery was founded on property of Theophobos, or even in his house, which would explain the origin of the tradition (see *ibid.* p. 246).

²²³ This is a distorted reference to the flight of Naṣr/Theophobos (see Translator's Note 1). Its purpose is to make Theophobos the chosen leader of his people, not a defeated rebel fleeing his fatherland.

²²⁴ Bābak had led the rebellion since 816/7. His first major defeat was not until 833 (see Translator's Note 1).

²²⁵ Bābak never entered Byzantine territory, although after his defeat some of his followers may have done so, perhaps precisely to find Theophobos, who had now served under Theophilos for three or four years (see Translator's Note 2). For Byzantine Sinope, see A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTF*, pp. 69-88.

return his own services and those of his people. The Emperor Theophilos raised the noble youth Theophobos to the rank of a Patrikios and gave him his own sister in marriage.²²⁶ He enrolled the Persians in the Roman state, giving them ranks and *strateiai*,²²⁷ and arranged for them to marry Roman women, even though later he treacherously put Theophobos to death.²²⁸

4. Some have related the story of Theophobos differently, in a similar manner to our previous narrative, although in no way identically. [39] Any differences between the various accounts of these events can be attributed to the difference between being an eye-witnesses and obtaining information at second-hand.²²⁹ The father of Theophobos, a man of royal blood, left Persia and entered Byzantium in great poverty. There he was employed by a woman who gave him a wage, as she kept a tavern. After he had worked for her for a long time, she fell in love with him and the two were joined in sexual union. She conceived and gave birth to a boy. Now of the Persians who had been dispersed to the various lands, some were adept at astronomy.²³⁰ They preferred this to all the other sciences and arts as it had been developed to be quite exact, but there were also other methods of divination and prognostication. Through these, perhaps, they discovered that Theophobos lived in the City of Constantine. Consequently, they approached the ruler of the Roman state, who at that time was Theophilos, and urgently requested that they be allowed to conduct a search in the City, as the person they were looking for did not lead a public life, and that they would reveal him to the Emperor. As the latter heard their words gladly, he ordered a thorough search of the City. The news spread everywhere and the search went on for many days, but all avenues of inquiry were exhausted with no result. Finally, one of the neighbors of the aforementioned woman, to whom it had been revealed that she had conceived by a Persian, talked with her often while he carried out his usual duties, and, upon directly inquiring, was clearly in-

²²⁶ The name of this woman is unknown. She may have been the sister of Theophilos' wife Theodora; see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 253, n. 3.

²²⁷ A *strateia* was roughly the Byzantine equivalent of a modern military 'commission.' It referred to the obligations imposed upon its holder and the financial arrangements made by the state to support him. See J. F. Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, pp. 36, 41 ff.

²²⁸ For the death of Theophobos, see sections 3.7-8 below and the corresponding notes. The information given here on the settlement of the Khurramites in the Byzantine Empire is accurate (see also the last sentence of 3.4 and Translator's Note 2).

²²⁹ The following story is even more fictitious than the previous one.

²³⁰ I.e., astrology.

formed that her son was of Persian descent, indeed the offspring of royal blood. He made these facts known to the searchers. They went to the woman with whom the Persian had lived, and persistently and carefully examined her concerning the course of life of the person they were seeking. She testified that the man she had lived with had already died, but showed them the twelve year old boy produced by her union with him. When he appeared before the Persians and their local escorts, both on account of his royal visage and because he had the curved nose of Cyrus (and they noted certain other characteristics as well),²³¹ they fell to his feet and performed obeisance before him.²³² They then took him along and led him to the Emperor. When the latter saw the boy, he approached the mother and asked her who the Persian was whom she had married and what his background had been. She confirmed that he was indeed of Persian [40] stock, and moreover that he was of royal descent. Pleased with these words, the Emperor installed Theophobos in the palace and arranged that he be provided for and educated in a fitting manner. Because of his natural advantages, and no less due to the magnificence of his new environment, Theophobos reached the heights of eloquence and learning. Consequently the Emperor, who became quite fond of him, bestowed upon him the dignity of a Patrikios, along with a large retinue and illustrious honors, and also a luxurious and most adequate life style. Hence the Emperor realized by observing Theophobos that the Persians were vigorous and high-minded warriors, and had them enrolled in the military lists, forming from them a Persian corps which he incorporated into the Roman armies.

5. Theophilos conducted frequent raids against the Ishmaelites, and Theophobos would accompany him. The Persians were emboldened to such a degree by their love of Theophobos and so rejoiced in his presence, that they chose to conduct the war against the Agarenoi all by themselves, and routed them with invincible force.²³³ The Emperor was moved

²³¹ The Byzantine hagiographers who invented these tales evidently believed that the Khurramites were the descendants of the ancient Persians. As for the nose of Cyrus (the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty and the Persian Empire, 559-529 B.C.), the hagiographers probably misread Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.4.21, where Cyrus says that his companion Chrysantas has a hooked nose.

²³² Another ancient Persian custom: Herodotos 1.134. It was not without its parallels in Byzantine ceremonial, etiquette, and religion (see sections 2.1 above, and O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, pp. 84-95; R. Guiland, 'La cérémonie de la προσκύνησις').

²³³ This is perhaps a reference to the Byzantine invasion of 'Abbāsid territory in 837 (see sections 3.11, 3.13, and Translator's Note 2).

to generosity by these events and, encouraged by the impressiveness of their success, he was inclined to appoint Theophobos to rule over the Persians. When, however, for some serious reason the Emperor was forced to hasten back to the Imperial capital, although he had entrusted the military command of the Persian contingents to Theophobos, he then ordered him to accompany him back to the City.²³⁴ The Persians, encouraged by a rebellious disposition, committed a foolish deed while they were on the littoral of Paphlagonia (which took its name from Paphlagon, the son of Phineus, who ruled that land²³⁵), and seized the city of Sinope, or, according to others, of Amastris.²³⁶ They surrounded Theophobos and proclaimed him King, quite against his will, hoping thus to revive the past customs of Persia. Theophobos was very distressed by their revolt, since it had been undertaken against his judgment, and he considered them to be completely responsible for the reckless deed. He bewailed his situation loudly and terribly, [41] and tried to shame, beg, and pressure them into appeasing the Emperor and seeking his good will, in order that, as was after all only the truth, he himself not be reckoned the cause of their uprising. They heard his entreaties, but were constrained by despair and no less driven onward by a mad impulse. Hence they in no way followed his advice, but were bent on doing what pleased them. Theophobos secretly sent a written message to the Emperor containing awe-inspiring oaths to the effect that he should in no way be held accountable for the deed, as it was due more to the foolishness of the Persians than to their love for himself. The Emperor was extremely generous and conciliatory and gave solemn assurances that he would pardon both him and his followers. Being informed of this and receiving forgiveness for their crimes the

²³⁴ These events took place after the disastrous battle of Dazimon in 838 (H. Grégoire, 'Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' pp. 191-192). Fleeing Byzantine soldiers spread the rumor that the Emperor had been killed. Theophilus rushed to the capital to prevent a usurpation. To secure his position against all possible claimants and their supporters he ordered Theophobos to join him there (see J. Rosser, 'Theophilus' Khurramite Policy and its Finale: The Revolt of Theophobos' Persian Troops in 838,' pp. 269-270; though Rosser's suggestion that Byzantine nobles were ready to raise Theophobos to the throne seems unlikely). Another possible reason for the precautions taken with respect to Theophobos was the treason of some Khurramite soldiers during the battle itself (see sections 3.2 above, and 3.14 below).

²³⁵ For the etiology see *Scholia in Apollonii Argonautica* 2.178; Arrian, *FGrH* fr. 77; Stephen of Byzantium s.v. Παφλαγονία; Constantine VII, *De Thematribus* 30.16-18; Eustathios, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem Pertinentes* 2.851, and *Commentarii in Dionysium Periegetem* 787.

²³⁶ The Khurramites did not in fact hold Amastris, which was in Paphlagonia, but only Sinope in the Armeniakon theme (see W. Treadgold, *BR*, n. 434). For Byzantine Sinope, see A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTF*, pp. 69-88; for Amastris, see K. Belke, *Paphlagonien und Honōrias* (= *TIB* v. 9), pp. 161-170. Both cities are on the coast of the Black Sea.

Persians left Sinope or Amastris.²³⁷ The first of these cities was named after the Amazon who built it,²³⁸ while the second, originally called Kromna, was named after a Persian woman named Amastris, the daughter of Oxyartes, the brother of Dareios. She married Dionysios the tyrant of Herakleia, under whose jurisdiction the city lay. Hence it came to be named after its ruler's wife.²³⁹

6. And so Theophobos was reconciled to the Emperor, took up his residence in the palace again, and enjoyed the same affection and care from the Emperor as he had earlier. But as for the Persians, who had increased in number to about thirty thousand,²⁴⁰ it did not seem advantageous to the Emperor to give them permission to act as they wanted. Hence they were divided into groups of two thousand and distributed to the Roman themes to be placed under the command of the local Strategoi. Special Tourmarchs were appointed to lead them. Let it be noted that even today the tourmai of the themes into which the Persians were enrolled are known as the "Persians."²⁴¹

[42] 7. Such was the conclusion of the Persian affair, for after their malicious revolt they were dispersed and almost entirely vanished. When the Emperor later became seriously ill, and seemed to be near death, he was consumed by the suspicion, fueled by the groundless slander of malignant men, that after his death Theophobos and the Persians would attack his heirs and the regents. For this reason, even though he was at the very gates of death, he confined Theophobos to the dungeons of the Boukoleon, and at night ordered that he be subjected to capital punishment. The wretched Emperor thus ended his life with a fitting monument

²³⁷ The Khurramite rebellion lasted from mid-838 to late 839 (see W. Treadgold, *The Chronological Accuracy of the Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845*, p. 183).

²³⁸ For the etiology see pseudo-Skymnos 941 ff.; *Scholia in Apollonii Argonautica* 2.946; Orosius 1.15.

²³⁹ For the etiology see Strabo 12.3.10; Stephen of Byzantium s.v. "Ἀμαστρίς. Amastris was married to Krateros, the regent of Macedonia, before she married Dionysios in the last quarter of the fourth century (for her and the founding of her city see D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, pp. 308-309). Her father Oxyartes was the brother of Dareios III, the Persian ruler overthrown by Alexander (Diodoros 20.109.7). For Herakleia, on the coast of the Black Sea, see K. Belke, *Paphlagonien und Honōrias* (= *TIB* v. 9), pp. 208-216.

²⁴⁰ This is a reference to the later refugees, the followers of Bābak, who was finally defeated by the Arabs in 837 (see Translator's Note 2).

²⁴¹ The information given here on the new settlement of the Khurramites is accurate (cf. the similar account of the Arabic historian al-Ṭabarī 1235). For the details see W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 314-317.

to his inhumanity. On account of the secrecy with which Theophobos was killed, a rumor was set about among the Persians that is still current today, according to which he "never tasted of death."²⁴²

8. But some have claimed differently that when on one occasion Theophilos was worsted in a military encounter during a war, Theophobos told him to take the Persians alone and attempt a night attack, trusting in God to prevail over the enemy. When the Emperor heard this plan, he lost his reason and his soul was shaken, and imagined as though in a dream that Theophobos was planning to overthrow him.²⁴³ For thus had some envious men upset him and instilled in him groundless suspicions, saying that he should not trust Theophobos' profitable advice because of his alleged treasonous intentions. But Theophobos was enflamed with holy indignation just like Elijah the Tishbite,²⁴⁴ and opposed the Emperor in a manner pleasing to God,²⁴⁵ becoming zealous like another Phinehas. He cut through the Emperor's prejudice with his words, as though he were using a lance,²⁴⁶ and this he said openly, that the Emperor would bear the burden of the blame for the Christian defeat, would that God might prevent it. The Emperor became excessively angry at these words (for he was deranged and prone to seething anger as his mind was afflicted by his bodily disorders) and the calumniators were in fact piling up nonsensical accusations that even contravened nature. [43] Theophobos became very worried. Taking with him a select group of his followers he fled to the city of Amastris and awaited the outcome of events there. The Emperor sent

²⁴² Cf. Matthew 16.28 = Mark 9.1 = Luke 9.27, John 8.52; Hebrews 2.9. The death of Theophobos is a very vexed issue. H. Grégoire argued that Theophobos was killed in a border skirmish with the Arabs in 839 or 840, and that later hagiographic accounts claimed that he was put to death by the ungrateful iconoclast Theophilos. These accounts lie behind Genesios 3.3 and 3.7-8 ('Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' pp. 192-198). W. Treadgold has argued against this interpretation, in support of the main accounts given in the Greek sources such as Genesios ('The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845,' pp. 189-190).

²⁴³ This section is highly confused. The defeat refers to the battle of Dazimon (22 July 838). Before that battle Theophobos and Manuel had urged Theophilos to attack at night (cf. Genesios 3.14, and the sources cited by W. Treadgold, *BR*, n. 410), but the Emperor disregarded their advice. He may have been upset at Theophobos and the Khurramites after the battle as some had tried to defect to the Arab side (see section 3.14 below). We have already seen that Theophilos recalled Theophobos to Constantinople soon after the battle, and thus precipitated the Khurramite revolt (see section 3.5 above).

²⁴⁴ Cf. 3 Kings 17.1, 21.19 ff.

²⁴⁵ Another pun on the name of the Emperor Theophilos (cf. also section 3.2 above).

²⁴⁶ Phinehas used a lance to transfix an Israelite and his Midianite wife through their "stomachs," an act of "zeal" that pleased Yahweh at the time (Numbers 25.7 ff.).

the fleet against him to seize both the city and Theophobos.²⁴⁷ The latter, being a pious man, in a God-fearing manner hesitated piously to initiate hostilities that would lead to the spilling of Christian blood.²⁴⁸ He thus surrendered to the God-hating Emperor who sent him a cross as a pledge of amnesty,²⁴⁹ and returned, unfortunately for him, as the agreements were not honored. For he was beheaded immediately, as some say, by Ooryphas,²⁵⁰ who was then the commander of the Imperial Vigla. According to others, however, the Emperor gave instructions that at the hour of his own death one of his household eunuchs should take Theophobos at night to the quarter of Pelagios and kill him there.²⁵¹

9. When on one occasion the two armies were in battle against each other, and the Ishmaelites were gaining the upper hand, the Emperor was surrounded and in danger of being captured.²⁵² Indeed he would have become a prisoner of war to the delight of all, had Manuel not revived the spirits of the men at his side by saying the following:

“Be men now friends, and fill your hearts with bravery,²⁵³

shamed by the bees, who protect their ruler to the death.” He then broke through the ranks of the Agarenoi with his men, even though he was “covered in blood and gore,”²⁵⁴ and pulled the Emperor out from danger. Three times he had to save the Emperor from encirclement and capture, for the latter was seized with dizziness while Manuel was leading him to safety, even though a wide path had been cleared for him. This is why the task had to be performed three times, even though a strap had been attached to the bit of the Emperor’s horse and then tied to another strap

²⁴⁷ W. Treadgold, *BR*, n. 434, discounts the historicity of the deployment of the fleet against the Khurramites.

²⁴⁸ The implication of all of these adjectives and adverbs, which pun on the names of Theophobos and the Emperor Theophilos, is that former was an iconodule (cf. Translator’s Note 3).

²⁴⁹ Cf. the surrender of Bardanes in section 1.7 and the promise of Manuel in section 3.10.

²⁵⁰ See the discussion of Theophobos’ death above in section 3.7. For the various commanders named Ooryphas (cf. 2.13), see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 143, n. 7.

²⁵¹ This last account is consistent with that of section 3.7. The exact location of the quarter of Pelagios is unknown. It was where the bodies of criminals were deposited after their execution; see R. Janin, *CB*, p. 373. The eunuch was probably Theoktistos.

²⁵² This is yet another description of the battle of Dazimon (22 July 838; see Translator’s Note 3).

²⁵³ Homer, *Iliad* 5.529.

²⁵⁴ Homer, *Iliad* 6.268, *Odyssey* 22.402, 23.48.

which was wound around Manuel's horse. But not even under these circumstances did he withdraw, until, on the fourth occasion, Manuel approached him and threatened to kill him with his own sword if he did not follow and thus escape imminent disaster. Manuel then led him out from the battle, and was thus shown to be a great savior of the Emperor. After the return to the Imperial City, [44] the Emperor showered him with honors and fitting gifts, as a mark of approval for his great loyalty. But because of this the ranks of envy turned against him also, armed with the weapons that oppose virtue, and falsely accused him of planning a rebellion when he was Strategos. When he heard these accusations, Manuel ventured to defect and fled to the Agarenoi, where he was received and greeted with great honors, leaving the Emperor with nothing but regrets for suspecting him.²⁵⁵

10. Much time elapsed, and the Agarenoi became contemptuous of us because of their victories, as they had appropriated our own Achilles. The Emperor decided to make a peace treaty with the Ishmaelites, and sent as ambassador the monk Iannis,²⁵⁶ who appeared both to the Agarenoi and to us as the most suitable man for an embassy. For he had made all the proper arrangements for the mutual exchange of prisoners, but was not overawed by the abundant gifts offered by the other side, so that the Caliph and his closest advisors were greatly amazed by him. The Caliph accordingly instructed that all his requests should be granted. One cannot know whether his incorruptibility was a facade or the truth.²⁵⁷ And hence due to this and to his affable manners Iannis managed to secure a favorable hearing, and his embassy achieved the liberation of many prisoners. He also contrived to secure an audience with Manuel and secretly

²⁵⁵ The chronology is again confused. The battle of Dazimon took place on 22 July 838, while Manuel fled to the Arabs almost a decade earlier. According to E. W. Brooks ('Review of A. A. Vasilijev, *Byzantion and the Arabs*,' pp. 297-298) and H. Grégoire ('Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' pp. 198-200), Manuel fled late in the reign of Michael II. But it has now been rather conclusively established that he fled at the very beginning of Theophilos' reign (J. Rosser, 'John the Grammarian's Embassy to Baghdad and the Recall of Manuel,' p. 170; W. Treadgold, 'The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845,' p. 177).

²⁵⁶ John the Grammarian, later Patriarch of Constantinople (838-843), had been Theophilos' tutor (see P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, pp. 143, 145, n. 143-144, 153). John's embassy occurred shortly after Manuel's flight, in 829/30 (see J. Rosser, 'John the Grammarian's Embassy to Baghdad and the Recall of Manuel' and W. Treadgold, *BR*, n. 371). The Caliph at the time was Ma'mun (813-833).

²⁵⁷ The virtue of another iconoclast is elsewhere treated with the same skepticism: section 1.4.

gave him an amulet in the shape of a cross, upon which he swore an oath and instructed him to return to the Emperor; John then left Syria.²⁵⁸

11. When the prisoners had been exchanged and the truce between the Agarenoi and the Romans had come to an end, the Emperor hastened to prosecute the war bravely, lest he fail to rival his father's bravery. He invaded the lands of the Ishmaelites with a large army and accumulated booty of every kind.²⁵⁹ [45] Indeed he penetrated so deeply into enemy territory that he reached the birthplace of the reigning Caliph, a city called Sozopetra, and laid siege to it in order to humiliate his enemy.²⁶⁰ But contrary to the Emperor's intentions, this action did not result in an overall advantage, as any benefits gained were outweighed by the greatest loss of life. For the Caliph was outraged, and, not being able to bear the insult which he saw inflicted upon his native land, he ordered that every standard-bearer should inscribe his charge with the words "To Amorion."²⁶¹ And he marched against that city with a large and very powerful army.²⁶² The Emperor, realizing that he could not resist this enemy, retreated back to the Queen of Cities with much booty.²⁶³ He was anxious to safeguard the city of Amorion as much as possible, both by fortifications and all others things required for its preservation. Meanwhile, he made an attempt, even if futile, to placate the rage of the Caliph by sending ambassadors to entreat him bearing valuable gifts and promises

²⁵⁸ Cf. the surrenders of Bardanes (1.7) and Theophobos (3.8).

²⁵⁹ This is a reference to the great invasion of 837 (see Translator's Note 2).

²⁶⁰ The Caliph was now Mu'tasim (833-842), another son of Hārūn al-Rashid. Sozopetra is Arabic Zibāṭra, and lies a few miles south of the city of Melitene, in the easternmost reaches of Cappadocia: see F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien* (= *TIB* v. 2), pp. 286-287. Hārūn al-Rashid was born in al-Rayy, south of the Caspian Sea, nowhere near Sozopetra (see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 3, p. 232). According to al-Ṭabarī (1324), Mu'tasim was born in the Khuld Palace (near Baghdad: G. Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 101-106: interestingly, Mu'tasim allowed his real birthplace to fall to ruins.). J. B. Bury (*ERE*, p. 262, n. 6) postulated that Greek sources like Genesios claimed that Sozopetra was the home city of the Caliph in order to counter-balance his destruction of Amorion, Theophilos' home city.

²⁶¹ On the basis of this passage (cf. also 3.14) and similar statements in other authors (e.g., George the Monk 797), W. Treadgold (*BR*, n. 366) concludes that Amorion was Theophilos' birthplace. But Amorion was the native city of Michael II, Theophilos' father, and Byzantine authors would call it Theophilos' native city as well, even if he had not actually been born there. According to al-Ṭabarī (1236) Mu'tasim chose to attack Amorion because it was considered impregnable.

²⁶² This occurred in the following year, 838.

²⁶³ This sentence is a conflation of two returns to Constantinople: first, in triumph after the campaign of 837 ("with much booty"); second, after the defeat at Dazimon (22 July 838).

of even greater ones.²⁶⁴ But they failed to persuade him as he was intent on exacting an equal retribution. He scorned the ambassadors, ridiculed their mission, reproached them for cowardice, and, as time passed, left them in suspense. Desiring to breach the defenses of the Emperor's native city from many sides, he surrounded it by a palisade. For, even though the men sent by the Emperor to fight did so in vain, Amorion had -- O truly it had! -- defenders distinguished for their prudence and bravery and renowned for their experience. But their defense was undermined by the deliberate treachery of a single malicious man, whose name, indicative of his thoughtlessness, was like the diminutive form of "ox."²⁶⁵ He seized upon the occasion of some seditious quarrel that broke out at that time [46] between the Christians and the Jews. So Amorion fell under the pressure of repeated attacks,²⁶⁶ and the new Sennacherib, due to divine dispensation or the favor of "God's unfathomable decisions,"²⁶⁷ rejoiced. The ambassadors were insulted and sent away (for they had been detained by the enemy during the siege) and the messages that they brought to the Emperor from his enemy consisted of vicious reproaches and contemptuous threats.²⁶⁸ What calculation can accurately record all that happened during the siege? What account can narrate with certainty the number and nature of all the grievous misfortunes that it caused? All the generals were at once led away to Syrian captivity, among whom were Patrikioi and dignitaries who shared the same fate. Some of them were decapitated and thus became victims worthy of lamentation.²⁶⁹

12. But why should I want to lament the fall of the city, as Jeremiah, Baruch, and Zachariah lamented the misfortunes of Jerusalem? I should

²⁶⁴ H. Ahrweiler has plausibly argued that the future Patriarch Photios (858-867, 877-886) was a member of this embassy ('Sur le carrière de Photius avant son patriarcat,' pp. 356-361).

²⁶⁵ "Boïditzes" (Theophanes Continuatus 130). For a discussion of the name see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 270-271.

²⁶⁶ The city fell on 12 August 838 (A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, p. 170, n. 3). The Greek sources are confused as to whether there was one act of treachery or two. The lengthy account of al-Ṭabari (1244-1253) mentions two, including that of "the man whose name was 'bull'." Genesios speaks of treason, but allows the city to fall before Arab assaults; see the discussions in J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 268-271; A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, pp. 168-170, n. 2, and pp. 188-190.

²⁶⁷ Psalm 35.7.

²⁶⁸ Psalm 118.22.

²⁶⁹ For the identity and fate of the captives see W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 303-304. The last clause seems to refer to the legendary Forty-Two Martyrs of Amorion, who were carried away to Persia and executed in 845 by Mu'tasim's son and successor Wāthiq; see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 271-272.

keep my silence lest I magnify the disaster.²⁷⁰ The Emperor straight-away sent ambassadors to the Caliph to bargain for the return of all the prisoners, whom he had not removed earlier from the city, despite the advice to that effect of many. For he was mostly concerned with those commanders who were related to him, with whom he had strengthened the defenses of the city, but also with his allies, and indeed all the grandees that supported his regime. He offered two hundred kentenaria²⁷¹ and one hundred nomismata in exchange for their release. But the Caliph refused the offer, saying that the maintenance of his army on this expedition had cost him only a little less than a thousand kentenaria.²⁷²

13. Some, however, give the following account. After Theophilos marched out with the Persians and defeated the Agarenoi in battle, he [47] then immediately marched the Persians to Sozopetra, the place where the Caliph had been born, and took it after a siege. The Caliph was angered by this event, and gathered a diverse army from Egypt and Palestine at Tarsos in Cilicia.²⁷³ This city gained its name from Bellerophon who had traveled there, and who fell and broke his foot.²⁷⁴ On another account it was called Tersos, from mount Tauros, which used to be called Tersia, because it had been the first to dry up after the Flood. For "tersai" means to dry up.²⁷⁵ The city itself lies on sunken ground, and Mt Tauros can be seen all around as Tarsos is enclosed by its prominent

²⁷⁰ Cf. George of Pisidia, *Bellum Avaricum* 123-4: "but one should keep silent about the greatest part of the suffering, for suffering that is spoken about can itself inflict pain."

²⁷¹ I.e., 1.440.000 nomismata. A kentenarion was a hundred pounds of gold; seventy-two gold coins (nomismata) were struck from each pound of gold. See glossary.

²⁷² I.e., 7.200.000 nomismata.

²⁷³ Muṭaṣim actually encamped near Tarsos on the way to Amorion (Theophanes Continuatus 126; al-Ṭabarī 1237). For Tarsos, contested between the Byzantines and the Arabs through the centuries, see F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien* (= *TIB* v. 5), v. 1, pp. 428-439.

²⁷⁴ 'Tarsos' in Greek. According to *LSJ* II 1, it refers to "the part between the toes and the heel." For Bellerophon and Tarsos see Dionysios Periegetes 867 ff.; Stephen of Byzantium s.v. Ταρσός.

²⁷⁵ The meaning of the word is given correctly, and, according to *LSJ*, τερσιά is an alternate form of τρᾱσιά, which can mean 'a drying place' (cf. Stephen of Byzantium s.v. Ταρσός). The city, however, took its name either from a local pre-Hellenic god (W. Ruge, 'Tarsos,' 2414) or from the word for 'foundry' (W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, p. 12). As for the flood, A. Diller ('Excerpts from Strabo and Stephanus in Byzantine Chronicles,' p. 246) suggested that the disastrous flooding of the river Kydnos during the reign of Justinian is meant. Prokopios claimed that the whole city of Tarsos was then submerged (*Buildings* 5.5.14-20, *Secret History* 18.40). But the syntax of Genesios (and that of Stephen of Byzantium) clearly refers to the mountains around the city as being the first to appear and dry up, which cannot apply to the flooding of the river Kydnos. The ultimate source must have been a mythographer describing the original Flood.

heights. The river Kydnos flows through the city and makes the surrounding areas fertile. Tarsos was originally built by Erichthonios,²⁷⁶ but then it was taken and rebuilt by Orsanēs, one of the Titans.²⁷⁷ It was originally an island in the river Kydnos, washed by it on both sides, but it later came to occupy its present position. The city was repaired and flourished under Semiramis, and it is said that a statue of her and her husband Ninos is dedicated to Hercules there.²⁷⁸ After this it was deserted by migrations, until Sardanapalos rebuilt it from the ground up along with Anchiale, and set up the following inscription: "The King of Nineve, the son of Anakyndaraxes, built Tarsos and Anchiale in a single day."²⁷⁹ The Caliph, then, sent his own son against the eastern provinces of the Empire with the easternmost of the brave Turks, who dwelled in neighboring lands,²⁸⁰ and a total manpower of about ten thousand, including all of

²⁷⁶ Erichthonios was an Athenian hero, who had no connection whatever to Tarsos; cf. the comment by S. Bergler: "Deliria. Nihil potest fieri stultius" (in the PG 109 edition of Genesios, col. 1076, n. 8).

²⁷⁷ Genesios is the only author who mentions this Titan. We might be tempted to repeat S. Bergler's comment (see previous note) were it not for the suggestion by A. H. Sayce ('The Early Geography of South-Eastern Asia Minor,' p. 49) that 'Orsanēs' might be a different version of the Hittite 'Arzawa.' 'Orsanēs' might thus be a preservation of the original name of the city of Tarsos. Cf. Stephen of Byzantium, s.v. "Ἀδανα, who says that the near-by Cilician town Adana was founded by "Adanos, a son of Gea and Ouranos," i.e., a Titan. Adana and Arzawa are in fact mentioned together in Hittite texts. These coincidences require further explanation.

²⁷⁸ The most famous and popular account of the Assyrian rulers Ninos and Semiramis in antiquity was that of Ktesias (c. 400 B.C.; *apud* Diodoros 2.1-20). Cilicia is mentioned as one of the places Ninos conquered (2.2.3), and both he and his wife were known as magnificent builders of cities. Semiramis has been identified as Sammuramat, wife of Shamshi-Adad V (823-811), and mother of Adad-nirari III (810-783; see *The Cambridge Ancient History*, v. 3, pt. 1, pp. 243-244; for a complete list of Assyrian Kings and their dates see A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 343-346). Assyrian influence over Tarsos is first attested under the reign of Shalmaneser III (858-824; see A. H. Sayce, 'The Early Geography of South-Eastern Asia Minor,' p. 49). For Hercules and Tarsos see D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, p. 1147.

²⁷⁹ The ultimate sources for this inscription are the historians of Alexander Aristoboulos (*FGrH* fr. 9) and Kallisthenes (*FGrH* fr. 34); see also Strabo 14.5.9; Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri*, 2.5.2-4; Athenaios, *Deipnosophistai* 12.529e-530c; the rest of the inscription reads as follows: "You now, O stranger, eat and drink and play, as though all other human things are not worth *this*," referring to the noise of hands clapping. A. H. M. Jones (*The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, pp. 194-195), identified Sardanapalos as Sennacherib (704-681), but another candidate is Ashurbanipal (cf. W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, p. 14). Anchiale probably did not exist in Byzantine times, but is nevertheless mentioned by Byzantine authors: F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien* (= *TIB* v. 5), v. 1, pp. 185-186.

²⁸⁰ Genesios is now retelling the Arab invasion of 838. Muṭaṣim did not send his son to attack the Empire from the East, but his general Afshin (who had led the attack on Bābak the previous year; see Translator's Note 2). Genesios or his source has perhaps confused the details of the great Arab invasion of 838 with those of the invasions of 831 and

the Armenian forces, both the Besparakanites and the Prince of Princes himself,²⁸¹ and Amer, who was the ruler of Melitene at the time.²⁸² They all assembled and encamped at Dazymon.²⁸³ For the advisors of the Caliph had held a council and decided that his son should direct the war with a suitable number of forces. "And if he wins, the victory will rebound upon you. If he loses, you will be safe."

[48] 14. When Theophilos was informed of these matters, he assembled an army composed of troops summoned from both the east and the west,²⁸⁴ including the Persians. Manuel had recently returned from Syria and was in command of the Scholai, just as before his flight.²⁸⁵ When the army had reached a region called Anze,²⁸⁶ the Emperor wished to see the enemy forces. Accompanied by Manuel he climbed a nearby hill and realized that the enemy army was smaller than that of the Romans. Manuel agreed with this estimation, but replied in the following way to the Emperor. "O Despot, if you want to know which army is the stronger one, you must consider the thicket of spears on either side."²⁸⁷ Theophilos then summoned all his generals to a war-council, at which Manuel and Theophobos proposed a night attack, while the rest urged him to fight by day. The latter view ultimately prevailed. When on the next day the two sides came to battle, the Ishmaelites began to fall back, but the Turks by persistently firing their arrows rallied and gave courage to the Ishmaelites,

833 by the Caliph Ma'mūn, who brought along his son 'Abbās and his half-brother... Mu'taṣim! (see W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 275-276, 279-281).

281 The 'Prince of Princes' was the Bagratid ruler of Taron in Armenia (northwest of lake Van), Bagarat II (830-852). The title was bestowed upon him by his ally the Caliph. The 'Besparakanites' was the ruler of Vaspurakan (east of Lake Van). J. B. Bury (*ERE*, p. 264, n. 5) believed that this was also Bagarat II, and hence accused Genesios of splitting him into two persons. But more recent scholars demonstrate that Taron and Vaspurakan were under different rulers at this time (e.g., C. Toumanoff in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, v. 4, pt. 1, pp. 610-612; A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, p. 148, n. 4; and R. Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, pp. 353-354). For a map showing these divisions, see C. Toumanoff, *op. cit.* p. 608; for a list of rulers, p. 781.

282 Properly 'Umar, emir of Melitene. For his career see M. Canard in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, v. 4, pt. 1, pp. 708-713, 735 (called 'Amr), and Genesios 4.13-15. Melitene, Arabic Malatya, was a city in eastern Cappadocia, held by the Arabs until the tenth century; see F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien* (= *TIB* v. 2), pp. 233-237. 'Umar used it a base from which to conduct near-annual raids into Byzantine territory.

283 I.e., Dazimon, which Genesios calls 'Anze' in the following section.

284 Cf. Psalms 106.2, 112.3

285 Manuel returned from Syria in 830 (see section 3.17 below), whereas the battle of Dazimon that Genesios is about to retell took place on 22 July 838.

286 I.e., Dazimon.

287 According to Theophanes Continuatus (127) it seemed to Manuel from the hill-top that the Arabs had more spears. Genesios' metaphor is confusing.

who in turn routed the Romans. Only the commanders of the tagmata, Manuel, and the Persians, stood by the Emperor. All of them had been surrounded and were being assaulted by the Agarenoi, even though the Turks could no longer use their bows as rain had relaxed the tension in their bow-strings. And even as the Roman forces were being attacked, Manuel perceived the Persians speaking to the enemy in the Saracen tongue, obviously trying to parley with them. He said to the Emperor, "I believe, O Emperor, that the difficult position of the Romans will tempt the Persians to betray you to the Caliph, from whom they defected earlier. Listen to my plan, which is a good one. I will select the best of troops from our army, and lead Your Majesty out from the enemy's grasp." The Emperor replied, "And if you do this, O Manuel, what will happen to the rest of our people?" "O Emperor, salvation has been given to you from God, and a higher providence will, I believe, also save our army." The Emperor barely escaped from his enemies, and reached the Chiliokomon.²⁸⁸ Those of his generals whose conscience was tormented by their desertion fell to their knees before him there, set aside their swords, and asked to be punished with death. The Emperor, stricken with grief, compassionately forgave them, "Because I, O men, have been spared by merciful God, even though you are guilty of desertion, I will show mercy to you."²⁸⁹ The enemy marched his army against Amorion as soon as he learned of the victory over the Romans. The Emperor waited at Nikaia²⁹⁰ and Dorylaon,²⁹¹ concerned with the fortunes of his native land, where the Caliph and his son now joined forces. When Theophilos learned of his city's fate, he became so enflamed inside that he thought the icy water that was brought to him was only lukewarm. And as a result of drinking it he was struck with dysentery.

15. The Emperor learned that a certain Agarene woman, who had been taken prisoner in the wars, was occasionally seized by a prophetic Pythian spirit.²⁹² He summoned her and asked her whose reign would last

²⁸⁸ Literally 'A Thousand Villages.' This was a fertile plain near the city of Ama-seia, between Paphlagonia and Pontos (Strabo 12.3.39; cf. A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTP*, p. 92).

²⁸⁹ Cf. Matthew 18.33, Luke 6.36.

²⁹⁰ The famous city in Bithynia; for its history in Byzantine times, see C. Foss, *Nicaea: A Byzantine Capital and Its Praises*.

²⁹¹ I.e., Dorylaion, a city in northwestern Phrygia; see K. Belke and N. Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien* (= *TIB* v. 7), pp. 238-242.

²⁹² Cf. section 1.9 above, for another case of prophetic possession, and the language used by Genesios to describe it.

for many years. She replied, "That of the Martenakioi."²⁹³ Henceforward the Emperor sought to harm Martenakios (for he, more than any other Emperor of the past, energetically investigated and busied himself with dynastic affairs) and also to attack his near relatives. But, due to Divine Providence, he failed to achieve his purpose, even though the lekanomancy of John²⁹⁴ showed that Basil²⁹⁵ would succeed to the throne. And as he was persuaded by the prophecy that was revealed to him,²⁹⁶ he forced Martenakios, a member of that family, to adopt the monastic habit, and to turn his own house into a monastery. In this manner, however, he escaped persecution at the hands of the Emperor.²⁹⁷ As the fame of the woman was propagated by rumor and all were extolling her powers, Constantine Triphyllios, fortunate to bear that noble name,²⁹⁸ who prided himself on the honors he had received from the Emperor in recognition for his services as ambassador, sought her out and asked her regarding his own future. She revealed the future to him in a loud voice, [50] "Both you and your children will be tonsured and forced to live the lives of monks under the Emperor Basil." And indeed all this came to pass. For he incurred Imperial displeasure and thus the prophecy was fulfilled just as his life was coming to an end. A similar fate befell his son, Niketas, who headed the *eidikon sekreton*,²⁹⁹ when the Emperor became angry with him. In addition, George, who was in charge of the military catalogues,³⁰⁰ was also among those put to the sword in the 'sphendone'

²⁹³ For the family of the Martenakioi, who seem to have been distant relatives of Theophilos, see C. Mango, 'Eudocia Ingerina, The Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty,' pp. 20-21.

²⁹⁴ John the Grammarian, then Patriarch of Constantinople. Note his depiction as a magician (cf. glossary under 'Iannis'). A 'lekanomancy' was a form of divination based on the employment of a dish or bowl filled with water (attested in Strabo 16.2.39; for the variety of its uses in Byzantine times, see Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινὸν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, v. 1, pt. 2, pp. 175-179).

²⁹⁵ The Emperor Basil I (867-886).

²⁹⁶ Referring to the Arab woman's prophesy, not John's.

²⁹⁷ Theophanes Continuatus (121-122) places the incident after the accession of John to the Patriarchal throne (838). W. Treadgold (*BR*, p. 301 and n. 411) connects it with Theophilos' return to Constantinople after the defeat at Dazimon.

²⁹⁸ A Sissinios Triphyllios is attested as Strategos of Thrace under Irene (Theophanes 474). He and his brother Niketas ("the treacherous, oathbreaking Triphillioi") helped Nikephoros I to depose Irene (*ibid.* 476). Sissinios died along with Nikephoros at the hands of the Bulgarians (491).

²⁹⁹ The *eidikos* handled certain Imperial warehouses and certain aspects of the treasury; see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, pp. 98-100; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, pp. 316-318. This Niketas is the recipient of Photios, *Letter* 240 (dated to 873/875).

³⁰⁰ I.e., 'Logothetes of the Stratiotikon.' This official controlled certain aspects of the financial relationship between the state and its soldiers; see R. Guillard, 'Les Logothètes,' pp. 25-31; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 314.

of the hippodrome during the chariot races and all his property was confiscated by the Imperial treasury.³⁰¹ Furthermore, the woman told Theophilos that after his death his son would inherit the throne along with his mother.³⁰² The honor due to the icons that he scorned would be gloriously restored and the Patriarch himself would be shamefully deposed. The Emperor, having full confidence in her powers, bound both his wife and the Logothetes Theoktistos with oaths neither to dare to change any of his arrangements after his death nor to remove John from his Patriarchal position.

16. But the Emperor could not bear the grief of the destruction of Amorion and decided not to remain inactive. Hence he sent the Patrikios Theodosios of the Baboutzikoi, a near relative, to the King of the Franks to seek his help in forming a large army which, with some of his officers, would plunder some Saracen lands and cities that lay between Libya and Asia.³⁰³

17. Earlier, when he had resided in Syria, Manuel had won the affection of both the Caliph and his subordinates on account of his experience and prudence in both speech and action. During his stay there he had accomplished deeds of exceptional nobility and courage in the wars against their enemies, both neighboring and more distant ones. Most of these deeds were made possible by his use of the Roman prisoners, as he had requested that they be enrolled under his command. As a result [51] he captured Chorosan and placed it under the authority of the Caliph, and he also fought bravely against the wild beasts that were ravaging that territory and its very inhabitants.³⁰⁴ Hence he was admired for both by

³⁰¹ George's precise identity, and the date of his execution, cannot be determined. The 'sphendone' was the semicircular southwestern end of the hippodrome.

³⁰² A safe prediction. Theophilos' wife was Theodora, for whom see Book 4.

³⁰³ For Theophilos' ambassador see R. Guiland, 'Patrices des règnes de Theophile et de Michel III,' p. 595. The King of the Franks was then Louis the Pious. The embassy was dispatched in 839 and its prime objective was probably to seek Louis' assistance in fighting the Arabs in Sicily; see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 273; W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 309. Yet some scholars have accepted the existence of two embassies, one in 838/9, the other in 840, under the direction of two different men, both named Theodosios (see W. Ohnsorge, *Abendland und Byzanz*, pp. 150-154).

³⁰⁴ For Manuel's defection to the Arabs, which lasted about a year (829-830), see section 3.9 above (for the date of his return see E. W. Brooks, 'Review of A. A. Vasilijev, *Byzantion and the Arabs*,' pp. 297-298; A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, p. 99, n. 3). The Greek sources place Manuel's campaigns on behalf of the Caliphate in "Khorāsān." For the possible meanings of this word see J. Rosser, 'John the Grammarian's Embassy to Baghdad and the Recall of Manuel,' p. 170, n. 18. According to W. Treadgold (*BR*, pp. 272-273), in the spring

the Ishmaelites. Because of these things they loved him greatly and became very familiar with him, though they knew that he had defected for purely pragmatic reasons and that he remained firm in our religion. They allowed him to march against the armies of their enemies, up to the limit of his own will and ability. After some time had passed, and he had been distinguished by his many noble deeds, he was forced by the Caliph to march against the Romans with the Caliph's son (or at least he pretended that he was forced). So he sent brave attendants along with a considerable sum of his own money to a small town called Geron,³⁰⁵ secretly warning the inhabitants of the impending Saracen attack and instructing them to prepare their defenses. With the two armies facing each other, he rushed out as though to make a daring attack, but instead, reversing his spear, he joined the ranks of the Christians and took refuge in the aforementioned town.³⁰⁶ He sent gifts of thanks to the Caliph's son in recognition of the hospitable reception he had received, and then returned to the City full of joy. He entered the church of the Virgin of Blachernai,³⁰⁷ knowing that that was where Theophilos most often paid his respects to the Deity. Theophilos gave him assurances of his good will, honored him greatly, and bestowed upon him the rank of Magistros.

18. The Emperor's plans for a joint campaign with the Franks against the Ishmaelites came to nothing, as his ambassador Theodosios had died in the meantime. Everyone was in a state of despondency, made worse by the impending death of the Emperor, who was afflicted by consumption, dysentery, and diarrhea. Disease had caused him to waste away and he was near death. He went to the Magnaura carried upon a litter, called for a universal assembly, and delivered a pitiable oration, appropriate to the circumstances, as the following account of it demonstrates. "Let my entire people mourn for me, let the Senate lament me, and let all my household attendants cry aloud, because although I am still in my youth and enjoy great happiness I am already about to be sepa-

of 830 Manuel accompanied the Caliph Mu'tasim's son 'Abbās on an expedition against Bābak and the Khurramites in Azerbaijan. For the use of exiled rebel Byzantine soldiers by Muslim rulers see also Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 1.9, 11-12.

³⁰⁵ Located either in Syria (A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, pp. 99-100, n. 3; H. Grégoire, 'Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' p. 198, n. 1) or more probably in Cappadocia (W. Treadgold, *BR*, n. 378: 'Geron' is a mistake for 'Koron'). Theophanes Continuatus (120) claims that Manuel defected in Cappadocia. For Koron, see F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien* (= *TIB* v. 2), pp. 216-217.

³⁰⁶ Reversing the spear in mid-charge was a standard sign of defection in the Byzantine world (e.g., Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* 7.9.5, 9.2.2).

³⁰⁷ For Michael II and this church see section 2.5 above.

rated from these things, and even more so from my young wife and my son, who has not yet reached adolescence. Now, before my death, I mourn the fact that I will completely lose them, no less [52] than the loneliness that will befall them after my departure from life. For these reasons I beg you not to forget these my last words, and also my mildness and consideration toward you. In return for all that I have done I ask you to show good will toward them,³⁰⁸ just as though you were feeling gratitude toward me and acting with a proper sense of duty. For I will never again see you, nor implore you with such words, nor entreat you with such exhortations, nor beg you with tears." When the Emperor had said these words, everyone lamented, wailed, and cried aloud.

19. Theophilos had thrown into confusion the calm sea of faith, and had terribly shaken those who peacefully sailed upon it.³⁰⁹ Among them was Michael, the Synkellos³¹⁰ of the church of Jerusalem, whom he threw into prison along with many monks. Upon the faces of two of them, Theophanes and Theodore, who were defenders of orthodoxy, he branded a message, in the Scythian manner.³¹¹ Such were the many

³⁰⁸ I.e., to his wife Theodora and his son Michael III (842-867).

³⁰⁹ One of Genesios' few successful metaphors.

³¹⁰ A 'Synkellos' was a close advisor to the Patriarch, and often succeeded him to the throne. In Constantinople he was appointed by the Emperor (Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis* 2.5; and see Athenagoras, "Ὁ θεσμός τῶν συγκέλλων ἐν τῷ Οἰκουμένικῳ Πατριαρχείῳ," and "Ὁ θεσμός τῶν συγκέλλων ἐν τοῖς Πατριαρχείοις Ἀλεξανδρείας, Ἀντιοχείας καὶ Ἱεροσολύμων," esp. 319-323 for Michael). For Michael, see *The Life of Michael the Synkellos*.

³¹¹ Orthodoxy is here to be equated with the veneration of icons. These two monks were the famous Graptōi brothers ('the inscribed ones,' for whom see S. Vailhé, 'Saint Michel le Syncelle et les deux frères Grapti, Saint Théodore et Saint Théophane'). A translation of the verses can be found in J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 139, n. 2:

In that fair town whose sacred streets were
trod by the pure feet of the Word of God-
The city all men's hearts desire to see-
These evil vessels of perversity
And superstition, working foul deeds there,
Were driven forth to this our City, where
Persisting in their wicked and lawless ways
they are condemned and, branded on the face
As scoundrels, hunted to their native place.

The low quality of the verses was apparently part of the punishment (the Emperor allegedly said, "If they are not good, never mind": *ibid.* p. 137). For the various dates (836-839) proposed for this incident, see W. Treadgold, 'The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845,' pp. 187-189. For this form of punishment in antiquity (including among the Scythians) see E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 142, 163-164 n. 44; C. P. Jones, 'Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-

storms that he hurled against piety. In truth during his entire reign there occurred many windy winters, hardships, droughts, and famines due to the bad temperament of the air,³¹² and earthquakes and eruptions of the earth occurred daily throughout his reign.³¹³ Many of the pious fled the winter of his impiety, as the saying has it,³¹⁴ and no one could find rest even on the Sabbath because of his inhumanity, [53] which raged against the calm lives of the Christians. And among the rest of his malicious designs was the establishment of Iannis on the Patriarchal throne, the fellow-initiate and executor of his vile heresy.

20. This Theophilos had many faults, among which was his arrogance, although, whether voluntarily or not, he aspired to certain praiseworthy qualities through his natural advantages. For though up to that time the walls of the City of Byzantium were not tall, thus allowing enemies to scale them easily, he restored them by making them taller, and inscribed his own name upon them.³¹⁵ In praise of him one must also mention his liberality, which should perhaps even be an acceptable attribute of Emperors who spurn the love of gain, or rather the shameful pursuit of it, although out of arrogance he called it most suitable and fitting. For on one occasion the Emperor inquired as to the identity of the owner of a ship that was sailing past the Boukoleon. Those present replied, "our Lady."³¹⁶ This greatly upset him, and after he summoned the Empress and heard the truth from her, said, "Alas, I have been shown to be a shipping merchant, since this ship belongs to my own wife!" And he immediately gave orders that it be burned along with its large and valuable cargo of goods and that none of it should be spared. For he believed that Imperial dignity should be acquired by protecting the people, not profiting from them.³¹⁷

Roman Antiquity; for a Byzantine parallel see Theophanes 469.

³¹² For such theories on the effects of the winds, see Strabo 6.4.1.

³¹³ Genesios took the description of the misfortunes of Theophilos' reign from George the Monk (798), who in turn got it from the *Vita Theodorae Augustae* 7.11-16 (cf. A. Markopoulos, 'Βίος της Αυτοκράτειρας Θεοδώρας,' pp. 249-255).

³¹⁴ Cf. 4 Maccabees 15.32. A similar expression is used to describe Theophilos' religious policies by Niketas David Paphlagon, *Vita Ignatii* col. 497D.

³¹⁵ For a photograph of one of Theophilos' wall inscriptions see W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 266.

³¹⁶ "Despoina," i.e., the Empress. For this word, see E. Bensammar, 'La titulature de l'imperatrice et sa signification,' pp. 284-288.

³¹⁷ This story has been interpreted as a sign of "a growth of trade" (W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 289), or of the Byzantine lack of the mercantile spirit (R. S. Lopez, 'The Role of Trade in the Economic Readjustment of Byzantium in the Seventh Century,' pp. 84-85; A. P. Kazhdan and A. W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, p. 7). It probably reflects nothing

21. Theophilos was very interested in the occult. For the sake of such investigations he freed the holy Methodios from prison, as he was wise and could easily resolve those issues. He maintained Methodios in the palace, even though to a certain extent he loathed him because of his orthodox beliefs.³¹⁸

[53] 22. He ruled for twelve years and three months, and died from the aforementioned disease on 24 January,³¹⁹ after senselessly and greatly insulting the Orthodox faith.

more than Theophilos' exalted view of Imperial dignity.

³¹⁸ Cf. *Vita Methodii* col. 1252; for Theophilos' interest in the occult and his employment of Methodios, see W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 308.

³¹⁹ According to Theophanes Continuatus (139) Theophilos died on 20 January (accepted by P. Grierson, 'Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337-1042),' pp. 56-57).

Book 4: Michael III (842-867), the son of Theophilos, and Basil I (867-886)

[55] 1. The ancestral reins of power were thus left to the direction of Michael and his pious mother Theodora in the year 6350, in the fifth indiction.³²⁰ The Regency was comprised of the Patrikios Theoktistos and the Protomagistros Manuel, who was disposed to show his affection for the Emperor through his constant solicitude, expressed in both words and deeds.³²¹ Therefore he went to the hippodrome and assembled there all his followers and the soldiers whom he could trust to persevere in obedience to himself. He then made the following introductory remarks. "You all know well the many proofs of our love for you, our care and benevolent protection of your interests, as well as our benefactions, in none of which we have ever wavered. For this reason it is your responsibility to be grateful to us in return, by obeying us both in word and deed. And whatever should seem preferable to us, accept it without question; whatever is our pleasure, be willing to zealously obey us regardless of the danger involved." He exhorted them with these words, and all immediately hastened to swear many oaths that they were in agreement and would obey. For they hoped that Manuel spoke to them in this manner because he had his own elevation to the throne in mind, even though his words were of the opposite meaning. For he explicitly shouted, "Long live Michael and Theodora!" And when they heard this proclamation, they were greatly disappointed and [56] dismayed in every possible way. But they obeyed his command and the succession was ensured.

³²⁰ I.e., 842, specifically on 21 January. Michael was two years old when his father died (cf. C. Mango, 'When was Michael III Born?').

³²¹ Manuel was Theodora's paternal uncle (Theophanes Continuatus 148) but had in fact died five years earlier, in the aftermath of the battle of Dazimon. The fictitious actions ascribed to him in Book 4 are derived from later hagiographic traditions that sought to transform him into a champion of the icons and associate him and the monastery that was founded in his honor with the monastery of Stoudios (cf. 4.2), an iconodule stronghold (see Translator's Note 3).

2. Orthodoxy was also openly restored, as the time was opportune and there were many willing and pious men.³²² The hateful heresy of the iconoclasts had lasted thirty years from the time of Leo the Amalekite. The noble aim of restoration was promoted by Theoktistos, but also by Manuel, even though he had succumbed to the heresy for a short while. But he had been stricken by some disease, and because of it despaired of recovery. At this time God appeared to him, acting in mysterious ways as with Hezekiah.³²³ The illness would not abate and he was severely emaciated, falling into a death-like sleep. Indeed it seemed to all that he had already died, as only a weak breath still kept him alive and a whispering voice could occasionally be heard. And what happened then? What divine intervention revealed itself to us? Some monks of Stoudios were roused up, men approved by the True God, and they visited him on the next day. For it had been announced that he had died and they came to his side to chant hymns of mourning on his behalf. And they did this "in his weakness," as the poet says.³²⁴ Some of the monks, concerning whom we have spoken above, approached the bed and, taking courage from God and the perfection of virtue, tried to revive the spirits of the man who was already considered dead, or at least about to die, by telling him that he would recover. And when he regained consciousness for a short time and inquired whether there really was any chance of his recovery, which seemed unlikely, they replied that, "If you promise to God that you will restore the ancestral worship of the icons, we confidently bring you the good news that you will live." They left, and what had been promised was quickly fulfilled. Incredibly, he evaded death, rising up as though from Hades itself. Realizing that he had survived the disease against all expectation, he pleaded before the Empress Theodora on behalf of Orthodoxy, telling her that the revered icons should be restored as of old,³²⁵ since concerning these matters she genuinely was of the same pious opinion, as were also, [57] they say, her mother the Patrikia and her own brothers the Patrikioi.³²⁶ But she resisted their pleas, and especially those

³²² Passages from Genesios 4.2-3 were eventually copied into the *Synodicon Vetus*, Appendix II 156.

³²³ King of Judea (716-687); he was particularly active against the idols. When he fell sick the prophet Isaiah helped cure him (4 Kings 20).

³²⁴ Homer, *Iliad* 15.246, 22.337.

³²⁵ Thus was Manuel brought back from the dead and recast as an iconodule by his followers (see H. Grégoire, 'Études sur le Neuvième Siècle,' pp. 522-523).

³²⁶ Theodora's mother was named Theoktiste Florina (Theophanes Continuatus 89), and her brothers were Bardas (later Caesar, see below) and Petronas (for whom see section 4.15).

of Manuel, either because she wished to postpone such a great endeavor, or because she loved her husband to such an absurd degree that she placed human things above God. For she said to Manuel that, "My husband the blessed Emperor was very wise and no matter of importance escaped his attention. How are we now to ignore his commands and turn to a different mode of conduct?"³²⁷ When she said these things, Manuel threatened her in a prudent manner, "If you do not arrange for the restoration of the icons and their worship, my benevolence and even the throne itself will be disposed of in a different way, if God is willing." On the outside it seemed as though the Empress was forced to submit to these words, but in her mind she was greatly pleased, and not only agreed to the proposal but actively promoted it. She ordered the Orthodox to meet at the house of the Kanikleios, where they discussed the practical and theoretical problems confronting their faith.³²⁸

3. The holy icons were thus quickly restored, after the proper deliberations had taken place, and ecclesiastical affairs began to improve. As for the priests and the archpriests, some abandoned their impiety, while those who resisted the true faith were justly expelled from the Church, beginning above all with the impious Patriarch Iannis, who was deprived of the Patriarchal throne. Worthy men of the Imperial bodyguard were sent to him to lead him away from the Patriarchal residence. But he refused to go with them. And although they wanted to lead him away, they could not make him comply, because through some sinister device he changed their minds and so they left him alone. When they [58] who sent these men were informed of what had happened, an even greater impetus to get rid of John was set into motion. So the Patrikios Bardas went to him and inquired why he would not leave the Patriarchate. But John had prepared his response, and showed Bardas his stomach which was spotted with needle-wounds. He said that he had unjustly suffered this punishment at

³²⁷ Theodora wanted the restoration of the icons but not the condemnation of her husband that it entailed. In the end, she had it both ways (cf. J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 145-146, who does not cite her explicit request in *Acta Graeca SS. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii* 244). It is also likely that the restoration of icons was expected to arouse considerable opposition and, accordingly, steps in this direction were taken with caution (F. Dvornik, 'The Patriarch Photius and Iconoclasm,' pp. 73-75). The condemnation of Theophilos would have been unpopular with many of his officers and supporters.

³²⁸ The Kanikleios was Theoktistos (cf. 1.19, 4.5). The synod held in his house (in March 843) marked the beginning of the restoration of the icons which is celebrated as the Triumph of Orthodoxy by the Eastern Church. For modern discussions of those events, see J. Gouillard, 'Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie: Édition et Commentaire,' pp. 119-129; C. Mango, 'The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photius,' pp. 133-134.

the hands of those who had been sent against him, as though they were pagan persecutors. "On account of this condition I suffer greatly, and, if it is possible, I would like my deposition to be postponed. I suffered most at the hands of Constantine the Armenian, the commander of the tagma of the Exkoubitoi." The abominable and sacrilegious man, O readers, dared to name this Constantine, who was said to be of Armenian descent, and was sent to Theophilos by his relatives and the rulers of his native land as a hostage and ambassador. Shortly afterwards, on account of the beauty of his soul and body and his noble disposition in all great affairs, he was appointed Droungarios of the Arithmos, i.e., of the Imperial Vigla; later he was made a Patrikios, and finally Logothetes of the Dromos.³²⁹ But the malicious charge was exposed, and the sensible judge was angered. Hence John was justly deposed from his ecclesiastical position.³³⁰ Indeed he unwillingly bestowed genuine praise upon the man he had accused. And in his place the pious Methodios was made Patriarch, who bore upon his body many marks of his suffering on behalf of true piety, in addition to the loss of his hair which was the result of his imprisonment in squalid cells.³³¹ These were in a sense the honors that recommended him. The direction of Church affairs was entrusted to this man with the complete consent of all the God-bearing men, both of those who lived in the Imperial City and of those who had come to it from all over the world. For on the day appointed for their assembly,³³² the Church of God was clothed in its proper dignity. They came from the famous mountains Olympos, Athos, and Ida, but also from the spiritual assembly near Mt Kyminas, all proudly proclaiming Orthodoxy.³³³

³²⁹ For the possibility of a relationship between Genesios and this Constantine see Translator's Introduction 2. The historian is clearly trying to clear Constantine from the charge of being an iconoclast (a suspicion that could reasonably be held of any man who was favored by Theophilos). P. Karlin-Hayter ('Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michael III,' p. 492, n. 1) doubted that Constantine became Logothetes. His full name was Constantine Maniakes (R. Guillard, 'Le Droungaire et le Grand Droungaire de la Veille,' pp. 343, 346).

³³⁰ On 4 March 843.

³³¹ Methodios was formally enthroned on 11 March 843. For his imprisonment see section 2.14 above, but he had later enjoyed the favor of Theophilos in the palace (cf. 3.21).

³³² This is a reference back to the synod of 843, held in the house of Theoktistos.

³³³ From Mt Olympos in Bithynia came St Ioannikios, who had been persecuted by Leo V. Many texts describe his participation in the restoration under Theodora, e.g., *Vita Theodorae Augustae* 10.28; *Narratio de Theophili Imperatoris Absolutione* 26-27; *The Life of Michael the Synkellos* 249; *Acta Graeca SS. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii* 245. According to J. Gouillard ('Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie: Édition et Commentaire,' p. 124, n. 35) the list of holy mountains is "more symbolic than historical." The assembly of monks at the Capital for the restoration of the icons is described by the *Acta Graeca SS. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii* 242-244. Kyminas was a mountain in Mysia (see the discussion by J. B. Bury, *ERE*,

Having received Imperial recompense and auspicious greetings, they returned to their dwellings.³³⁴ From that time onward and until this very day, the harbors of Orthodoxy have been free of stormy weather, as they are guarded by the power of Christ.

4. Such were the first achievements of Michael and Theodora, the pious Emperors. As for Iannis, he was confined to a monastery, [59] in the church of which he saw a representation of the bodily nature of our Savior and God Christ, and also of the Mother of God and the Archangels. So he ordered his servant to gouge out the eyes of the holy icons, saying that he could not bear to look upon them. In his youth this thrice-accursed man had been an icon-maker, and the abbot of the so-called Imperial monastery of the martyrs Sergios and Bakchos.³³⁵ When the God-fearing Lady Theodora learned of his behavior, she was hotly moved in her zeal for Christ's love and would have gouged out his hateful eyes, had she not been prevented by the entreaties of others. But she did send some of her attendants to give him two hundred lashes.³³⁶

5. But the heretics impudently sought to fight against the restoration, and tricked a young woman with a large bribe to testify publicly to the Church against the new Patriarch, with the son that had been born to her (he was Metrophanes, later the Bishop of the city of Smyrna). The heretics thus made public their accusation of secret sexual intercourse.³³⁷ Hence there was a great commotion among those of unsound religion, and they ridiculed us and uttered indignant complaints. Because of this, the first of the Magistroi, namely Manuel, and the Patrikios, Kanikleios, and Logothetes of the Dromos Theoktistos went to the Patriarchate accompanied by the rest of the Senators, distressed at the accusations that had

p. 150, n. 1). Ida is a mountain in the Troad.

³³⁴ The *Acta Graeca SS. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii* (244-246) claims that Theodora tried to gain the support of some prominent monks by offering them money which Theophilus had allegedly left them in return for their past sufferings. The monk Symeon's initial reaction was "hotter than fire... 'To Hell with him and his money!'"

³³⁵ For this monastery see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 451-454. For John's youthful veneration of icons, see also Photius, *Homily* 15.1.

³³⁶ For the various possibilities for John's place of exile, see P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, p. 144, n. 152. The date of his death is unknown and it is highly unlikely that Theodora, or anyone else, disturbed him in the manner described by Genesios. Such stories represent the wishful thinking of the victorious iconodules.

³³⁷ The following story is related only by a few chronicles and is probably not true (cf. J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 151, who notes the silence of the *Vita Methodii*). Metrophanes was the future Bishop of Smyrna (c. 857-880), who later sided with Ignatios in the fight against Photios.

been let loose without any restraint. When the Patriarch saw them and realized the depth of the sorrow of the assembled pious men, he was desirous of not becoming himself "a rock of scandal" and "a stumbling-stone"³³⁸ for the orthodox. The venerable man then revealed his private parts to the gaze of all who were there, and to their surprise it was found that they were parched and withered, thus showing that the charge against him was without ground. He hurried to explain, saying that, "When I was in Rome once, on a mission to the Bishop of that city regarding the charges that had been leveled against the Patriarch Nikephoros,³³⁹ Satan vexed me greatly with sexual temptations. I therefore strongly beseeched the Apostle Peter to rid me of my bodily [60] urges. And one night when I was sleeping in his church, that leader of the Apostles appeared before me and with his right hand crushed my private parts, saying that I would no longer be excited by that hedonistic inclination, nor would I be subject to the hot passion that arises from it any more. Waking up in great pain, I realized that I was now to live with this withered flesh, which you now see." When the Patriarch had thus humbly revealed the complete truth, all those who were present were relieved of their distress. And hence Manuel re-examined the woman trying to uncover her true motives, and threatened her with his sword to reveal the identity of those who had instigated her. His threats, and the raised sword, compelled her to declare the truth concerning the plot and the amount of money she had received, which was deposited in a small jar, hidden in turn in a larger container of grain. The money was found exactly where she said it would be, and a cloud of shame descended upon the heretics. But the Patriarch was forgiving of those who had attacked him, obedient to the law of Christ that one should forgive seventy-seven times.³⁴⁰ And so the civil officials who carried out the examination also decreed that henceforth the punishment of the accused, even though it was more of a benefit, was to be the following: on the anniversary of the restoration of Orthodoxy, they were to lead the litany procession with lit candles from the Church of the Virgin at Blachernai. This was enforced for many years, indeed for the rest of their lives, and in the congregation held in the Great Church the heterodox had to endure the condemnation of their own detestable apostasy and the celebration of Orthodoxy.

³³⁸ Isaiah 8.14, variously misquoted in Romans 9.32-33 and 1 Peter 2.8.

³³⁹ For the circumstances of Methodios' journey to Rome see the *Vita Methodii* col. 1248.

³⁴⁰ Matthew 18.22.

6. At that time the heresy of the Zelikians appeared under the leadership of Zelix, one of the foremost of the Imperial secretaries. On a festal day, and in the presence of the Emperor in the Great Church of God, he and his followers expounded the doctrines of their heresy and donned bright clothes, anointing themselves with the myrrh of perfection.³⁴¹

[61] 7. In the meantime the state was well governed by Michael and his mother Theodora, with the help of the aforementioned men. The ruler of the Bulgarians, a people descended from both Avars and Khazars who took their name from some lord named Bulgaros,³⁴² had received from the Romans the land around Dorystolon³⁴³ and Mysia³⁴⁴ in which to dwell. He now sent an offensive message threatening to invade Roman territory. But the Empress gathered the army and marched to the Bulgarian border in a manly fashion, where she sent him the following proud response. "If you defeat a woman, you will have small occasion to boast. But if you lose, your defeat will be ridiculed by all." When he heard these words, the Scythian decided to stay at home and pursue a policy of peace.³⁴⁵

8. Not much time had passed, when the harmony between the aforementioned men began to show signs of strain, and a malicious quarrel initiated by Theoktistos forced Manuel to change his lodgings. For Manuel had lived with Theoktistos in the palace, and they had deliberated together on matters of state. But Theoktistos began to insinuate falsely that Manuel was secretly fanning the flames of rebellion. Prudently considering his situation, Manuel decided to live at home, and from there to commute to the palace to carry out his duties. For he lived near the cistern of Aspar, which had been built by Aspar and hence had received his

³⁴¹ For Zelix and his obscure heresy see J. Gouillard, 'Deux figures mal connues du second iconoclasm,' pp. 371-387.

³⁴² For the etiology see also Leo the Deacon, *History* 103. The Bulgarians were not descended from either Avars or Khazars. For a modern discussion of their origin and settlement in the Balkans see J. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 43 ff., 66 ff.

³⁴³ Ancient Durostorum, Byzantine Dorostolon, modern Silistra, on the right bank of the lower Danube.

³⁴⁴ Moesia is meant. The territory occupied by the Bulgarians had that name in antiquity.

³⁴⁵ Two Bulgarian incursions into Byzantine territory are known to have occurred during the regency of Theodora, the first in 846, when the thirty-year treaty made with Leo V expired (see section 2.7 above), by the Bulgarian ruler Malamir/Persian (*ibid.* pp. 108-111), the second, in 852 by Boris (*ibid.* pp. 111-112). The parallel account of Theophanes Continuatus (162) unambiguously refers to the second attack.

name.³⁴⁶ And after having lived a glorious and long life he died. He had converted his house into a monastery and was buried there.

9. After the departure of Manuel from the palace, Bardas enviously began to plot Theoktistos' elimination, devising the following plan. He insinuated to the Emperor Michael that his mother was planning a marriage for herself or for one of her daughters.³⁴⁷ In this way [62] Michael's right to the throne would be betrayed, and he would be deposed from it and blinded. Michael was shaken by these words and decided that Theoktistos was behind it all. So both he and Bardas plotted together against him, and their aim was to murder him or rather exile him if they could. For this purpose they enlisted as accomplices certain military commanders of medium rank who had been removed from their positions, together with a sister of Theodora, whose honorific name was Good Maria,³⁴⁸ who agreed to secretly help the Emperor murder Theoktistos. She was to be the look-out, hidden in a lofty apartment with a peep-hole, and from there would inform the Emperor when she saw Bardas attack Theoktistos. Having made these arrangements, Bardas pretended that he was relaxing on the couches in the Lausiakos and conversing with the *praepositoi*. And as Theoktistos was busy carrying out his duties as *Logothetes* of the *Dromos*, moving to and from the Emperor's chamber, Bardas lay in wait and watched him very attentively like a concealed lion ready to pounce suddenly, chase, strike, and knock to the ground.³⁴⁹ But the magnitude of the task held him back, and although he often rose up to attack, his impulse was cut short. Finally, although after some delay, he rose from his seat and caught up with Theoktistos and, to put it poetically,

³⁴⁶ Flavius Ardaburius Aspar, an Arian and an Alan, had a distinguished military career in the fifth century, reaching the consulship in 434. For his cistern, see R. Janin, *CB*, pp. 197-198, 296-297.

³⁴⁷ P. Karlin-Hayter ('Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III,' pp. 460-474) has analyzed the way in which Genesios and Theophanes Continuatus utilized, and occasionally altered, the same sources for the murder of Theoktistos (4.9-10). She also contrasts those sources with the more reliable account of Symeon the Logothete. Bardas hated Theoktistos because the eunuch had been responsible for sending him into exile for a period (after 844). After his return, Bardas was out of favor and it is more likely that he approached the Emperor through an intermediary (cf. *ibid.* pp. 467-8). Michael may have been upset at Theoktistos because he and Theodora had recently made him marry a woman he did not like (Eudokia Dekapolitissa; see E. Kislinger, 'Eudokia Ingerina, Basileios I. und Michael III,' pp. 122-123).

³⁴⁸ Kalomaria was married to Arsaber the Patrikios (Theophanes Continuatus 175), who was the brother of John the Grammarian (*ibid.* 156).

³⁴⁹ Genesios has here omitted an exchange between Theoktistos and Bardas and replaced it with this metaphor (P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III,' pp. 467-468).

"caught him with a stroke behind the hollow of the knee
and unnerved the tendons"³⁵⁰

and brought him to the ground. And he immediately drew his sword from its scabbard, which was fastened to his shoulder, and used it to repel any attacks from others. The ex-generals involved in the plot rushed from their seats to join the fray. And the look-out woman signaled the Emperor to pass through the bronze doors built by the Emperor Tiberios.³⁵¹ And standing there he passed his Imperial judgment by ordering that Theoktistos be put to death. His attendants dragged him outside to the Skyla, where he was to be held until the Imperial command was carried out. But when the Empress learned of all this, she unhesitatingly rushed to the Lausiakos seeking her assistant [63] and refusing to allow anyone to kill him. But to no avail, even though she cried out passionately. For she was shouted down and returned to her quarters in tears. For one of the ex-generals, from the family of the Melissenoi, told her to go back home, calling it a day for striking blows.

10. After Theoktistos had been held at the Skyla for a while, he entreated the Armenian Constantine, whom we mentioned earlier, to help him. Constantine, motivated by considerations of humanity, shut the gates that led to the chamber of Justinian, thus cutting off the passage to the oncoming soldiers who seemed to have lost control over themselves.³⁵² He thereby hoped to prevent the spilling of Christian blood while Theoktistos' exile was being arranged. This had indeed been the plan of Bardas, in the event that all went smoothly. But some men advised the Emperor that if Theoktistos was not killed immediately the Empress would raise a grievous rebellion. Thus the Emperor, by a swift order, instigated the Scythian band from the Tauric Chersonese³⁵³ to seek out

³⁵⁰ Homer, *Iliad* 23.726.

³⁵¹ For a discussion of these doors see R. Guiland, 'La Porte des Skyla,' p. 77. The Emperor Tiberios II (578-582) is meant.

³⁵² According to other sources, Bardas and his accomplice had already killed Theoktistos. But P. Karlin-Hayter, ('Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III,' pp. 468-469) prefers the version of Genesisios. The Triklinos of Justinian (II) connected the Skyla and the Lausiakos.

³⁵³ I.e., the Crimea. P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Les Tauroscythes de Génésios,' believes that the ethnic identification of this band is an addition to the text of Genesisios by a later copyist. H.-G. Beck has argued that this group was the personal retinue of Bardas, and not an imperial bodyguard ('Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen,' pp. 17-18). The major power which the Byzantines had to contend with over the Crimea was the Khazar state, which was in relative decline in the ninth century, when the Byzantines established a theme there

Theoktistos and make short work of him. They went off enthusiastically, but found the gates closed, and Constantine resisted their onrush from the inside. Yet he slowly yielded, hoping to remedy the immoderate behavior of evil men by means of an evil moderation, even though he was brave in both spirit and mind. And he used all his strength, in both deeds and words, to calm those who were bent on attacking Theoktistos, although for the most part he merely entreated them. The chances for Theoktistos' survival waned along with the strength of his protector, and necessity brought matters to a head since power

"dwells near necessity"³⁵⁴

and

"the strength of necessity is unmatched"³⁵⁵

[64] as the sayings go. Constantine eventually stood away from the doors, thus allowing those outside to pour in. One of them approached the chair under which Theoktistos had hidden and there delivered a fatal blow to his belly with his sword.³⁵⁶ As Manuel subsequently prophesied to Bardas,

"You have bared a sword, Bardas, in the palace
and have turned its cutting edge against your flesh."

11. Shortly afterwards the position of the Empress was also shaken. She lost the equal footing with her son that she had enjoyed, and was ostracized from the palace along with her own daughters. She went to the monastery called the Gastria and there adopted the monastic habit.³⁵⁷ Earlier, when she realized in advance that these things would happen, she

(see, in general, M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025*, pp. 233-235).

³⁵⁴ Hesiod, *Days and Works* 288.

³⁵⁵ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 105. The author's learned quotations are intended to excuse or to deflect attention away from his hero's failure.

³⁵⁶ Theoktistos was killed on 20 November 855 (cf. F. Halkin, 'Trois dates précisées grace au Synaxaire,' p. 11-14).

³⁵⁷ Theodora was removed from power on 15 March 856, but was not expelled from the palace to a monastery until 858 (J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 469-471; her removal may have been due to her possible involvement in a plot against her brother Bardas: P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III,' p. 473). For the monastery of Gastria see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 67-68. Theodora and her three daughters Thekla, Anastasia, and Poulcheria, were buried in that monastery (Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis* 2.42).

assembled the Senate and revealed to them the amount of money in the treasury, which was one thousand and ninety kentenaria of gold,³⁵⁸ and about three kentenaria of silver.³⁵⁹ Of this some had been left as her husband's testament, the rest she had added herself. Grieving at her fall, she spoke to her son of his prodigality, the product of his ignorant stupidity, and predicted that it would be the cause of his inevitable demise.

12. The reins of Empire were now in hands of Michael alone, and Bardas stood at his side without any hesitation, as he was a relative of the Emperor and no less on account of his audacious deed. For these reasons it seemed reasonable to him to acquire the dignity of a Caesar, which would also secure his safety, although on this last point [65] he was wrong. Such was in fact the advice that he had received from Philotheos, a close acquaintance who held the rank of Protospatharios.³⁶⁰ Having received the honor of the position of Caesar,³⁶¹ Bardas accomplished many great deeds, aiming at augmenting his status as Caesar and from there, as some say, at taking the throne itself.

13. Under the leadership of Amer, the ruler of Melitene, the impious Ishmaelites raided the land of the Romans.³⁶² The Emperor did not want to sit by idly, and pretended to possess a manly and active disposition. Hence he marched with his army to Samosata, an Ishmaelite city.³⁶³ He laid siege to it for three days, but on Sunday he arranged for a Christian service, desiring to partake of the bloodless communion. But at that very moment the Agarenoi suddenly threw open their gates, sallied forth, and easily routed the Emperor. Their success was so complete that they cap-

³⁵⁸ I.e., 7.848.000 nomismata.

³⁵⁹ The editors A. Lesmüller-Werner and I. Thurn restore the reading three *thousand* kentenaria of silver. But this restoration has been shown to be erroneous (see M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, p. 224, n. 23; and W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine State Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries*, p. 122, n. 25; on p. 10 in Treadgold a typo makes it 190.000 Byzantine pounds instead of 109.000).

³⁶⁰ For this rank see R. Guiland, 'Le Protospathaire'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 297. A Protospatharios named Theophilos is mentioned by Niketas David Paphlagon as belonging to the circle of Michael III (*Vita Ignatii* col. 528); later Niketas mentions a close friend of Bardas named Philotheos, who is Logothetes of the genikon (col. 533D).

³⁶¹ On 26 April 862 (cf. the last sentence of 4.15). The dignity of Caesar was usually bestowed upon an Emperor's son and designated him as successor to the throne; cf. R. Guiland, 'Le Césarats.'

³⁶² For Amer ('Umar), the semi-independent emir of Melitene, see sections 3.13 above and 4.13-15 below.

³⁶³ Samosata was on the banks of the Euphrates river, and was the target of many Byzantine raids (cf. E. Honigsmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches*, pp. 58, 62, 71-73).

tured his tent and all his supplies. The Emperor himself barely managed to survive.³⁶⁴

14. Two years later Amer audaciously invaded with thirty thousand soldiers. Michael gathered an army that numbered about forty thousand men especially from Thrace and Macedonia, but also from the armies of the rest of the themes, and marched out to oppose him. He occupied a place called Dazimon, encamping in a valley named Kellarion.³⁶⁵ Amer expertly misguided his enemy, by first marching on the road that leads to Zelisa,³⁶⁶ and then turning toward Chonarion and joining battle with the Romans there. The Emperor was immediately defeated and fled for six miles. At this point the Imperial mounts and the accompanying army became exhausted, especially since the heat of the season was unbearable. It seemed advantageous to climb a rocky [66] and inaccessible mountain, called Anzes. Having occupied the mountain, the Emperor established his camp upon it. But Amer managed to surround him and attacked. A furious and thick battle ensued between the two sides in which the supremacy of the enemy would soon have caused a catastrophe for the Imperial army (to such a great degree did they prevail), had it not been offset by the terrain, by the brave men who protected the Emperor, and

³⁶⁴ This campaign is dated to 859 (J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 279). Yet al-Ṭabarī (1447) claims it was a success for the Byzantines. It has therefore been suggested that Michael's alleged defeat was due not to his imprudent piety, but to the pro-Macedonian bias of the later Greek sources (A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, p. 235, n. 3). For Michael's strengthening of the fortifications of Ankyra in preparation for this campaign, see H. Grégoire, 'Inscriptions historiques byzantines,' pp. 437-449. This article initiated the modern rehabilitation of Michael III, for which see also E. Kislinger, 'Michael III. – Image und Realität.'

The presence at Samosata of the Paulician leader Karbeas at the time of Michael's 'defeat' is attested by Theophanes Continuatus 176-177. The enemy was therefore not just 'Umar.

³⁶⁵ This is Genesios' final account of the battle of Dazimon, which Theophilos fought and lost on 22 July 838 (see Translator's Note 3). Manuel's efforts to save Michael III in this last version are virtually identical to his efforts to save Theophilos in the real battle of Dazimon (see 3.9, 3.14). This doublet suggested to Grégoire that the history of Manuel had been extended beyond its mortal scope by his later followers ('Études sur le Neuvième Siècle,' pp. 520-524; 'Manuel et Théophobe ou le concurrence de deux monastères,' *passim*). In other words the events described in this section probably did not happen, though 'Umar may have conducted his annual raid as usual (cf., A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, p. 245, n. 3). For Kellarion and, two lines below, Chonarion, which are otherwise unknown, see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 282, n. 2-3; W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 329.

³⁶⁶ According to J. B. Bury (*ERE*, p. 282, n. 2), Zelisa is "unquestionably" Zela, but W. M. Ramsay suggested another possibility: Berisa (*The Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 329). Both places flank Dazimon. Zela/Zila was an important city of ancient Pontos: see Strabo 11.8.4, 12.3.37, and modern discussions in D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, pp. 182, 1073, 1079; A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTF*, p. 8. For Berisa/Verisa, see D. Magie, *op. cit.* p. 1079.

especially by the help from above. Realizing the impending disaster, Michael conferred with the Magistros Manuel concerning their salvation, saying the following. "What shall we do, O Manuel Magistros? For we are lost."³⁶⁷ And he replied to him, "Despot, take off the dark-red sandals, which indicate your Imperial station, and put on black ones. Do likewise with the rest of your Imperial raiment. I will take 500 men chosen for their bravery, and we will attack one section of the enemy line and easily escape." The Emperor replied, "What will the rest of our people do after that?" Manuel responded, "It is above all imperative that your Majesty be saved, and that you do not fall into the hands of the enemy. For should that happen, it would be a disaster for the Christians. We will piously await to see what God decides concerning the rest of the army." Choosing 500 brave men, Manuel moved toward a section of the Saracen forces and, shouting "Victory to the Cross," gallantly fell upon them with his picked men and broke their formation. But the Emperor, seized with cowardice, turned back. The Magistros had moved on ahead a short distance when he discovered through inquiry that the Emperor was not with him. He immediately turned back and attacked another part of the enemy army, cut through it, and rejoined the Emperor. But these repeated attacks had taken up a good part of the day and caused the death of many Saracens. In addition there was a shortage of water and a lack of fodder for the animals, and so Amer withdrew his army and allowed to rest in a valley called Dora.³⁶⁸ The Emperor then seized the opportunity to evade the murderous hands of his enemies, and did not halt his flight for a full day, and in this manner he escaped.

[67] 15. Two years later, this same Amer again invaded Roman territory, priding himself on his army which now numbered forty thousand troops. With this force he completely destroyed the Armeniakon theme and penetrated as far as Aminsos on the sea.³⁶⁹ And when he saw the multitude of prisoners and the amount of booty that he had gained, he went completely mad, and, since the sea blocked his further progress, he ordered his own soldiers to cut rods of wood and strike it, just as Xerxes, when he was crossing the Hellespont, had ordered that the sea be whipped with metal ones, saying, "Why have we found this obstacle here

³⁶⁷ Cf. Euripides, *Medea* 1271-2, and Matthew 8.25; Luke 8.24.

³⁶⁸ Otherwise unknown.

³⁶⁹ I.e., Amisos, in Pontos on the Black Sea (for which see A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTP*, pp. 92-95).

before us? Why have we not advanced further, plundering the locals?"³⁷⁰ The Emperor was greatly saddened by the reports concerning Amer's many captives, and he said to his table-companions, "Woe! Woe! Is there no man so inspired by sincere love for my rule and for Christians in general that he will volunteer to march out and fight against the impious Amer?" The Emperor's mood roused Petronas, a brother of Theodora and Bardas, to say to the Emperor that, "God gave your Glorious Rule many subjects, who truly love you, O Despot, and who are willing to die for that love. But in war one encounters both victories and misfortunes. And no man has known a victory free of fear, unless it be decreed by God." The Emperor replied to these words, "Well then Petronas, do you choose to march against the enemy and to risk your life on behalf of all Christians and my rule?" He responded that, "I am ready, O Emperor, to spill all the blood in my body for your rule and for all Christians."³⁷¹ Reassured by these bold words, the Emperor placed him in command of the tagma of the Scholai.³⁷² This confirmed Petronas' resoluteness, and he immediately took action, rushing against the enemy with a picked, though not a large, force. This did not escape Amer's attention, [68] for one of the Roman deserters came to him and said, "Let it be known to you, Amer, that Petronas, famous because of his relation to the Emperor, boasted that he would make war against you. Hence the Emperor appointed him to command the entire army. Petronas gathered and equipped the entire army of the themes in preparation of the battle

³⁷⁰ The story is of course modeled on Herodotos 7.35, but Genesios appears to be confusing two separate orders by Xerxes: the Hellespont was to receive three hundred lashes and then a pair of (presumably iron) fetters were to be thrown into it. Later Byzantine epics copied some of these passages from Genesios; see H. Grégoire, 'Michael III et Basile le Macédonien dans les inscriptions d'Ancyre,' pp. 328-331 (cf. also section 4.40 below).

³⁷¹ According to P. Karlin-Hayter ('Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michael III,' p. 494) a biography of Petronas may lurk behind this section of Genesios. Macedonian propaganda portrayed Michael III as a weak ruler, but incidents like this one demonstrate that he may have commanded considerable loyalty among some of his subjects. Cf. the response he received from the missionary Constantine when he asked him to go preach the Gospel to the Khazars: "If you command, lord, on such a mission I shall go gladly on foot and unshod, without all that the Lord commanded His disciples not to bring" (*The Vita of Constantine* 8). Constantine was of course obeying God more than Michael.

³⁷² This section describes the final encounter between the Byzantine forces and 'Umar, which took place in 863. G. Huxley ('The Emperor Michael III and the Battle of Bishop's Meadow (A.D. 863)'), based on Arabic historians, has shown that there were two battles, not one. In the first, which took place in Cappadocia, 'Umar defeated an army led by Michael III (might Genesios 4.14 contain memories of that battle?). The second battle is described in this section of Genesios, and it took place on 3 September 863.

against you."³⁷³ Amer then revealed this information to his officers, and asked them what should be done. They unanimously replied to him that, "No one, O Amer, has yet accomplished such achievements against the Roman State as we have now. There is no need for us to remain here any longer, but let us take the road back to our country, the road on which we came. And should Petronas overtake us in pursuit, then we will give battle. If not, then we will return to our homes." But, if anyone was, Amer himself was conceited and arrogant, and said, "I will in no way follow your advice, because I do not want our enemy to ascribe my behavior to cowardice and flight. I will offer battle to him." And setting out from Aminosos, he traveled for about 100 miles and reached Abysianon, on the border between Paphlagonia and the Armeniakon theme.³⁷⁴ He encamped at a place called Porson,³⁷⁵ where there was a mountain; Petronas was on the other side of it. When night fell, Petronas sent some of the most able Strategoi to climb and occupy the mountain, lest the enemy capture it first. But Amer had taken the same precaution. The two groups met while they were climbing and God allowed his people to prevail and send their enemies tumbling down. Then Petronas and his entire army went up the mountain. In the ensuing battle, God who watches over all allowed him who is humble, modest, and respectful of his commands, to prevail, while weakening his arrogant enemy.³⁷⁶ And so Amer found his just rewards in the thrust of a dagger, and when he died his entire army was routed and slaughtered. Almost all of it was lost, except for Amer's son who managed to cross the Halys river with about a hundred men. But in the Charsianon theme³⁷⁷ he encountered a merarch [69] named Machairas,³⁷⁸ who took him and his followers captive. God's "mighty hand"³⁷⁹ worked its wonders and almost not a single one of them escaped to report the

³⁷³ The testimony of the deserter concerning the size of Petronas' force directly contradicts the previous statement by Genesios.

³⁷⁴ The manuscript of Genesios' text reads "500 miles" but was emended by Grégoire to "100 miles" because no place on the Paphlagonian-Anatolikon border can be 500 miles away from Amisos ('Études sur le Neuvième Siècle,' pp. 535-536). The exact location of Abysianon is not known: K. Belke, *Paphlagonien und Honōrias* (= TIB v. 9), p. 155.

³⁷⁵ The exact location is unknown; see *ibid.* p. 262, and G. Huxley, 'The Emperor Michael III and the Battle of Bishop's Meadow (A.D. 863),' p. 445.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Isaiah 66.2; Proverbs 3.34.

³⁷⁷ This was a region of Cappadocia, between Caesarea and the southern end of the Armeniakon theme river. It became a theme only after the battle (see D. Potache, 'Le thème et la forteresse, de Charsianon: Recherches dans la région d'Akdagmadeni,' pp. 107-109).

³⁷⁸ I.e., 'Dagger-man.' At this time, a merarch was an officer in the thematic armies equivalent to a Tourmarch (cf. N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, pp. 108-109, n. 65).

³⁷⁹ Exodus 6.1.

disaster to the home town of the Saracens.³⁸⁰ When the news was announced to the Emperor, the City was filled with joyful revelry, and Petronas was honored with the rank of Magistros.³⁸¹ Some say that Bardas, who had helped his brother rout the enemy, was then raised to the rank of Caesar, during the Easter days of the tenth indiction.³⁸²

16. When the ruler of the Bulgarians learned of this great success, he was deeply impressed and made peaceful overtures, even though earlier he had shown aggressive intentions. His people were oppressed by famine,³⁸³ and hence, as was to be expected, they understood the Homeric saying,

"all deaths are hateful to us, mortal wretches, but famine
is the most pitiful, the worst end that a man can come to,"³⁸⁴

to such an extent that all of them were willing to be baptized as Christians, and their ruler decided to change his name to Michael, after the Emperor. Therefore some of the most learned archpriests were sent to introduce the Christian faith into Bulgaria.³⁸⁵

17. The Caesar Bardas greatly honored wisdom and learning, even though he was more interested in its display. He gathered wise men at the Magnaura, some of them philosophers and geometricians, others astronomers, and still others grammarians, and instructed them to teach all who came for free. And he paid such great attention to these matters, that he

³⁸⁰ It is also possible that the Paulician leader Karbeas was killed in this battle (see P. Lemerle, 'Pauliciens,' pp. 91-92). For the Paulicians and their involvement in the warfare of these years see the last note to section 4.13.

³⁸¹ For the career of Petronas see R. Guiland, 'Patrices des règnes de Theophile et de Michel III,' pp. 597-598.

³⁸² The date given here for the elevation of Bardas to the Caesarship is correct (862), however, this event occurred over a year before the victory of Petronas over Umar. Petronas' victory was probably the occasion for the chant recorded by Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis* 1.69 col. 624A.

³⁸³ Cf. Niketas David Paphlagon, *Vita Ignatii* col. 525B.

³⁸⁴ Homer, *Odyssey* 12.341-342. A quotation is once again used to cover up the author's ignorance of the true reasons for the events he is about to relate.

³⁸⁵ The Bulgarian Khan who took the step of conversion to Christianity was Boris (852-889). The conversion of Bulgaria was one of the most important events in the religious and cultural history of the Medieval Balkans, and involved a struggle between Boris, the Byzantines, and the Papacy for control of the new see. At the same time factions within the Byzantine Church were at odds over matters of both internal and external policy (Genesios briefly touches on them in section 4.18). These struggles were all interconnected. See the narrative by J. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 112-131.

appointed the great philosopher Leo to teach philosophy,³⁸⁶ his student Theodore to teach geometry, Theodegios to teach astronomy, [70] Kometas grammar,³⁸⁷ and all were supported by adequate Imperial salaries. He diligently attended their lectures and considered the aptitude of each of the students, and all this gave him the highest hopes. The salaries gave the teachers a great incentive to care for their students, and hence the seeds of learning that he planted resulted in a bounty for us today and secured the immortality of his memory. In addition he could not be bribed, although this virtue was affected and artificial. For he was a very greedy man, and desired to possess a great deal of land, and costly land at that. Indeed he believed its acquisition to be a necessity. For he wanted exceedingly to be honored and respected with titles and parades, which induced him to be arrogant and audacious, even though his fake high-mindedness and lordly behavior were no match for true virtue. Hence without any restraint he pretended to rule in his own right, hanging like a weight around Michael's neck, and it happened that Senators would often overlook the real Emperor. The reason for this was perhaps Michael's addiction to spectacles and the hippodrome, which came about through his neglect of serious matters, or perhaps because he was excited by the impulses of youth.³⁸⁸

18. Bardas was not only moved by love of Imperial rule, he could also not restrain himself from trying to dominate Church affairs. He therefore plotted the deposition from the Patriarchal throne of the dignified Ignatios, because Ignatios had barred him from receiving communion on account of some abominable sin which he was suspected of having committed.³⁸⁹ Ignatios had nevertheless often admonished and advised him in

³⁸⁶ Known as 'The Mathematician,' Leo was a relative of John the Grammarian and an inventor. His reputation had reached the Caliph Ma'mun, and he was appointed Archbishop of Thessalonike from 840 to 843 by the iconoclastic regime of Theophilus. See P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, pp. 148-176.

³⁸⁷ For Kometas, see *ibid.* pp. 166-167.

³⁸⁸ Genesis wishes to condemn both Bardas and Michael, who were murdered by Basil, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty. Yet in this passage his condemnation of Bardas is negated by his condemnation of Michael. According to R. Jenkins, "the decade of the administration of Bardas (856-866) was the most brilliant in all Byzantine history" (*Byzantium*, p. 160).

³⁸⁹ Bardas was suspected of sleeping with his daughter-in-law. F. Dvornik ('Patriarch Ignatius and Caesar Bardas') has assembled and translated many of the pre-Genesian sources that describe the confrontation between the two men. Neither Dvornik nor J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 188, believe the charge, although R. Jenkins does (*Byzantium*, p. 171 f.). Genesis 4.18 is heavily dependent on pro-Ignatian sources. Much of what he says may have come from Niketas David Paphlagon, *Vita Ignatii* col. 504 ff., a strongly anti-Photian diatribe.

this respect to follow the rules set down by St Paul,³⁹⁰ but Bardas had not followed his instructions and had disrespectfully and repeatedly come to communion. Hence on one occasion Bardas was firmly repulsed on account of his audacious indifference, and he savagely insulted and threatened Ignatios that he would depose him from his priestly position, and have him tortured as well. And soon afterwards, Bardas expelled that great man from the Church, without any regard for his virtue, by plotting against him. Ignatios had been elected after the four-year term and death of the thrice-blessed Methodios.³⁹¹ His advantages at that time were his great piety and the favor shown to the Orthodox by his father, [71] while his rivals, the admittedly virtuous Basil and Gregory, the sons of the Emperor Leo, seemed less qualified on account of their father's blameworthy heresy.³⁹² It happened therefore that Ignatios was chosen for the highest of all high positions. In Ignatios' place, Bardas now made Photios Patriarch,³⁹³ who in some respects surpassed the greatest men, but in others was quite inferior. Many of the Senators who were invited to express their opinion concerning the deposition of the one man and the elevation of the other ratified Bardas' measures, but Constantine alone, whom we mentioned earlier, did not give his consent. He said that it was not permissible to nominate a member of the laity for that position. But Bardas did not stop here in his attack against Ignatios. For he devised so many tortures for him, that Ignatios almost lost his life.³⁹⁴ Thrown to the

³⁹⁰ 1 Corinthians 11.28: "Let every man examine himself and then he may partake of the bread and drink from the cup." Cf. Niketas David Paphlagon, *Vita Ignatii* col. 501C.

³⁹¹ Ignatios' first term as Patriarch lasted from 4 July 847 to 23 October 858. Ignatios had in fact been appointed Patriarch by Theodora, who had not convened the regular elective synod. This technicality allowed Ignatios' enemy Bardas and his successor Photios to consider his appointment invalid. Ignatios' position was further weakened by the fall of his supporter Theodora, and his refusal to condone her removal to a monastery (see section 4.11 above); cf. J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 187-190. Ignatios' removal led to a bitter struggle with his followers and the Papacy, which decided at this time to interfere in the internal affairs of the Byzantine Church (see in general F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, for the deposition of Ignatios: c. 2).

³⁹² Ignatios was the son of the Emperor Michael I Rangabe (811-813; cf. 1.5). He had been castrated by Leo V (813-820), the father of his rivals Basil and Gregory (1.21), who, in turn, had been castrated by Michael II, the grandfather of the current Emperor Michael III.

³⁹³ On 25 December 858.

³⁹⁴ Genesios has omitted the removal of Ignatios to the nearby island of Terebinthos (Niketas David Paphlagon, *Vita Ignatii* col. 505), but he continues to follow the Ignatian propagandists, according to whom the aim of the torture of their hero was to elicit a resignation from him. Niketas records tortures inflicted before the council of 861 (*ibid.* col. 513), but those recorded below by Genesios Niketas dates after the council (col. 520-521). For a discussion of these issues see P. Karlin-Hayter ('Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michael III,' pp. 475-484), who suggests that the torture of Ignatios really took

ground, his arms and legs were tied in the form of a cross and he was cruelly tortured in this position. But the tortures did not end there, and indeed they worsened in severity. Ignatios was handed over by the Caesar³⁹⁵ to the most vicious Theodore, called the Fool, to John Gorgonites, and Nicholas Skoutellops, who took him to the famous church of the Apostles, into the tomb of the Emperors,³⁹⁶ where he was imprisoned and worn out no less by bodily punishments than by hunger and thirst. Then they stripped him naked and locked him in the sarcophagus of Constantine Kopronymos.³⁹⁷ These events took place during a harsh winter, and the stone cut sharply into his back and was very cold to the touch both on account of the weather and its own nature. In there the martyr lost blood and decayed matter from his guts.³⁹⁸ And all of you know what his pain was like, who have experienced dysentery and the other afflictions caused by cold. The intestine is stricken by pangs of chill and inflammation, and the patient suffers a continuous great pain. He then acquires an exceedingly yellow complexion and shivers painfully as the surrounding air becomes more dense; the throbbing pain of the coagulating blood on the surface of the skin is followed by exhaustion. Even the inner spirit is profoundly oppressed and grows dull through the compression of the body. Then the affliction caused by the injured area begins to worsen, [72] as all the pain is concentrated there.³⁹⁹ In this manner did the blessed man bear these tortures, even though his castrated state and old age had in many ways decreased his resistance, but he never said anything malicious against the Lord in return for all that he had suffered, neither did he submit to his tormentors, nor did he waver, nor did he conclude, like the companions of the man from Ithaca:

“Better to take in a single time our chances of dying or living

place soon after his deposition.

³⁹⁵ Note that Bardas was not yet a Caesar when all these events occurred.

³⁹⁶ For this church, see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 41-50; for its function as a tomb of Emperors see P. Grierson, ‘The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337-1042),’ *passim*.

³⁹⁷ The arch-iconoclast Emperor Constantine V (741-775), dubbed by his enemies as the ‘dung-named.’ According to Theophanes (400), he earned the name by defecating into his baptismal font. Constantine’s remains had been ceremoniously destroyed in the earlier part of Michael’s reign, after the restoration of the icons (see S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V*, pp. 164-5, n. 58; in Appendix 1, Gero gives a different explanation for the origin of the nickname).

³⁹⁸ Literally “the athlete,” a term used by Christians to designate martyrs from the days of the earliest persecutions.

³⁹⁹ For a famous description of the effects of cold on the body see St Basil, *Homilia* 19.5, *In sanctos quadraginta martyres*.

than to go on being squeezed in the stark encounter,"⁴⁰⁰

namely by the Caesar. For his struggle was

"no less against flesh and blood than the powers and dominions of darkness of this age,"⁴⁰¹

or rather we should say the contest was equally against both. Finally the Lord, on whose account the holy man suffered, sent a certain man from Ignatios' guard, not to hurt him more, but to console him. He was Constantine the Armenian, whom we have often had occasion to mention. He would secretly bring a glass bottle filled with wine, and in addition to this some bread, and occasionally some apples, and would lure away the evil guards temporarily. He would then go to the holy man and lower him out of the sarcophagus,⁴⁰² giving him the fruits of pity, thus alleviating his misfortunes, even if only for a short while, until the return of the others. For these actions Constantine was greatly thanked by him after Ignatios had been liberated from his torturous ordeal. For he was no creature of the Caesar's, even though he was in his service, and he did not agree with his evil intentions, knowing that one should

"give unto God what is God's and unto Caesar what is Caesar's"⁴⁰³

so as "not to anger the Almighty."⁴⁰⁴

19. The Emperor Michael zealously practiced the skills of chariot racing in the magnificent palace on the Propontis, where there was a church of the great martyr Mamas.⁴⁰⁵ There he held constant races, riding upon the chariot himself, and all was arranged just like the races in the Imperial City. In the church there was a valuable icon of the Mother of God, near the Imperial stand upon which Michael used to receive the prizes of victory. He was so entirely passionate about chariot [73] competitions that on one occasion, when his co-driver was the aforemen-

⁴⁰⁰ Homer, *Iliad* 15.511-512. All the Achaeans are meant. Genesios probably thought he was quoting the *Odyssey*.

⁴⁰¹ Ephesians 6.12.

⁴⁰² Roman and Byzantine Imperial sarcophagi stand taller than the ordinary man.

⁴⁰³ Matthew 22.21; Mark 12.17; Luke 20.25.

⁴⁰⁴ Psalm 106.11. Note that despite the extremely laudatory presentation of Constantine's actions, they remain historically inconsequential.

⁴⁰⁵ For this palace see R. Janin, *CP*, p. 140.

tioned Constantine, his chariot was accidentally overturned and Constantine was almost run over by the tumbling wreck. This incident caused him to be considered unworthy, and he was all the more held in contempt because of the false Patriarch and the latter's most shameful clerical following, who maliciously fought against the true Patriarch. They enthroned unworthy bishops and performed polluted sacrifices instead of holy services.⁴⁰⁶ As a result the whole Christian populace considered Michael to be impure and profane and longed for the end of his reign.⁴⁰⁷ And this indeed did not take long to happen, especially after the murder of the Caesar, to which, as they say, the Emperor Michael had consented because of his unsteady character. But this⁴⁰⁸ also earned him the ultimate punishment, as will now be related.

20. Both of them⁴⁰⁹ made preparations for a naval attack on Crete, and for this purpose they mobilized the entire army both by land and by sea, intending to lead the expedition themselves. But when they had traveled as far as Kepoi,⁴¹⁰ the plot against the Caesar Bardas was immediately set into motion. This plot had been devised by God and had the assent of the Emperor, and was even known to Bardas himself, against whom the plot was directed. For on one of the days before the expedition, Bardas invited his acquaintances to his house and offered them his hospitality for the last time. After they had drunk together, he revealed knowledge of his own imminent downfall to his closest friends. For he had visited a nearby monastery, called Hodegoi,⁴¹¹ and while he

⁴⁰⁶ These statements prove that even in the tenth century, some learned Byzantines refused to recognize Photios, and continued the old struggle of the Ignatians, long after all the individuals involved had been reconciled and had died. This passage refers to the deposition by Photios of bishops who were hostile to him and his Imperial patrons and their replacement by more amenable individuals (see F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, p. 63).

⁴⁰⁷ These sentiments are indicative of the author's pro-Macedonian bias.

⁴⁰⁸ It is not clear whether the murder of Bardas or Michael's unsteady character is meant.

⁴⁰⁹ I.e., Michael and Bardas.

⁴¹⁰ On the Maeander river in the Thrakesion theme (see A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, p. 260; for the expedition in general see pp. 258-260). The murder of Bardas involved a tangle of conspiracies and alleged conspiracies: Bardas against Michael, Michael against Bardas, 'others' against Bardas, with most sides claiming to be the intended victim of another. Genesisios has already hinted at a few of these theories. The only conspiracy we can be relatively sure of was that of Basil and Symbatios against Bardas, even though Genesisios does not mention Basil at all as a participant in any of the plots. But the future Emperor did in fact slay Bardas with his own hand in front of Michael himself. For narratives see A. Vogt, *Basil I^{er}*, pp. 37-38; J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 170-172. For the rise of Basil see sections 4.24-28 below.

⁴¹¹ I.e., 'they who show the path.' The origin of the name is uncertain, although this

was standing before the entrance to the place of prayer offering farewell hymns with lit candles, his cloak was suddenly snatched off his shoulders and openly fell to the ground. When he realized the importance of what had happened, he addressed loud and mournful requests to the Virgin with tears in his eyes, and prayed that he be allowed to evade what he suspected would happen.

21. This was not the only sign given to Bardas concerning his own death, but another one had occurred earlier.⁴¹² It seemed to the Caesar that he saw in a dream [74] the following scene. On a festive day the Emperor and the Caesar were going to the Church of the Wisdom of God⁴¹³ in the usual magnificent procession. When they reached the doors, they saw brilliant angels appear upon them, and further inside an old man on a throne appeared above them. Who was he? He was Peter, the foremost of the Apostles, and kneeling before him was a tearful Ignatios reminding him of all that he had suffered. Peter, moved by the man's misfortunes, told him that he would be avenged by the hand of the Lord. And at the same time he handed a small dagger to one of two men who were standing at his side as though they were praepositoi dressed in golden clothing. With a nod he commanded him to move the Emperor to the right, and the Caesar against whom God was angry (thus did he describe him) to the left, and to cut him to pieces with the dagger as a punishment. And while the order was being carried out, he said that Michael should expect to meet the same fate, and called him an impious child.

22. Yet another sign had occurred concerning the death of the Caesar. While he was staying at Kepoi, his sister Theodora sent him a garment that was slightly too short, and upon it was woven a golden partridge. When he received it he asked, "Why is it too short? And what is the partridge suppose to indicate?" And he imagined the answer to both questions: the partridge seemed to indicate the deceit of the sender, who wished to avenge the murder of Theoktistos,⁴¹⁴ while he conjectured that the undersized garment stood for the small number of days he had left. Hence he ordered his son Antigonos, who was a Patrikios and the

monastery was dedicated to the Virgin Hodegetria. It was located near Hagia Sophia on the eastern coast of the City; see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 199-207.

⁴¹² See Niketas David Paphlagon, *Vita Ignatii* cols. 533-536.

⁴¹³ I.e., Hagia Sophia.

⁴¹⁴ For which see sections 4.9-10 above.

commander of the Scholai,⁴¹⁵ to assemble all the forces under his command and to march back to the Imperial City. Antigonos was greatly vexed at this order. And besides, the Caesar's plots against the Emperor Michael were being revealed. A short while earlier, an earthquake had occurred, stronger than any that had ever been recorded, and knocked down a statue which had stood on a column near St Anna,⁴¹⁶ known as 'The Second.' The event was related by the Caesar to Leo the Philosopher, who interpreted it unambiguously as a sign that the second in command after the Emperor would be killed and that the Caesar Bardas would be succeeded by Basil, whom Bardas henceforth regarded with hatred.

[75] 23. And all these things happened to the Caesar in accordance with the prophecy. For while they were at Kepoi the Emperor attended to affairs of State, but the Caesar was given over to his lust for power, arrogantly raising himself above the Emperor and his attendants. He soon became unbearable and they began to plot against him with the intention of killing him. But they feared that his large following would manage to overpower them. So they organized a contest of horsemanship involving his son Antigonos, thus managing to draw the latter far away from the Imperial tent, and along with him the Caesar's bodyguards, in order that they might thus divert their attention, giving the conspirators the chance to attack and kill Bardas while he was unguarded.⁴¹⁷ Then Symbatios, who was married to the Caesar's daughter and was a Patrikios and Logothetes of the Dromos,⁴¹⁸ entered the tent when the Emperor and the Caesar were present and delivered his report on the public accounts. When he left the tent he made the sign of the cross in front of himself, as he was the leader of the conspiracy, and the swordsmen who were hiding in a corner of the tent rushed forward and mercilessly butchered the Caesar before the Emperor himself. This happened on 21 April of the fourteenth indiction.⁴¹⁹ Among the murderers was one Chaldos, whose

⁴¹⁵ According to the information in Theophanes Continuatus (180) Antigonos would have been thirteen years old in 866. For his career see R. Guiland, 'Patrices des règnes de Theophile et de Michel III,' pp. 598, 600.

⁴¹⁶ For this church see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 35-37. Its location is not securely attested.

⁴¹⁷ This statement seems to contradict the one in section 4.22 that Bardas had ordered Antigonos to return to Constantinople.

⁴¹⁸ For this man's career and relations with Basil see R. Guiland, 'Patrices des règnes de Theophile et de Michel III,' pp. 605-606. A daughter of Bardas named Irene is known from Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis* 2.42 (I owe this reference to Dr. Ann Moffatt of the Australian National University, Canberra).

⁴¹⁹ I.e., 866. Basil was the first to strike (J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 172).

surname was Tziphinarites. The treacherous attack took place suddenly and the shocked Emperor accidentally collapsed upon the body. But the Droungarios of the Vigla, whose name was Constantine, intervened to save the Emperor and make sure that he was not murdered as well. For he was a loyal protector of the Emperor and showed that in his solicitude for him he was willing to accept even mortal dangers. And perhaps both men would have been killed,⁴²⁰ had Constantine himself not aided and strengthened the Emperor, pulling him away from the killers with auspicious words and his very own hands, as he was fortified by his nobility of mind and bravery.⁴²¹ As for the murderers, they hacked Bardas' body into many pieces, and triumphantly paraded his genitals, which had been stuck on the end of a spear, around the camp. In this manner they hoped to torment him even after his death. [76] But not a few soldiers were supporters of the Caesar. And the two sides would have come to battle, had that same Constantine not exerted all his strength to prevent such an occurrence. Thanks to him a few misfortunes at least were forestalled. But the state of affairs was stormier than the Ikarian sea⁴²² when the strong Euros wind is blowing.⁴²³ No one cared for the operations against the enemy, but each considered only his own advantage. Some supported the Emperor, others the Caesar, and still others the high-minded Basil, as he was greatly loved by the Emperor. Everyone thus returned immediately to the Imperial City.

24. Basil prided himself on being a descendant of the Parthian Arsakes the Elder, who, on account of his physical and intellectual superiority, managed to win the throne of the Assyrians,⁴²⁴ and also of Tiridates, a king of the same line.⁴²⁵ But he was also the descendant of the

⁴²⁰ I.e., both Michael and Bardas.

⁴²¹ Constantine is again granted a noble role. Yet history proved very accommodating to his nobility as no one had planned to kill the Emperor in the first place. The claim that Michael fell upon the body is a pathetic attempt to allow Constantine an action conducive to the Emperor's safety (cf. Translator's Introduction 2).

⁴²² Between Chios and Samos.

⁴²³ An east wind; see Homer, *Iliad* 2.145.

⁴²⁴ Arsakes I (c. 247-210 B.C.), founder of the Parthian kingdom.

⁴²⁵ According to Niketas David Paphlagon, *Vita Ignatii* col. 565-568, after Photios had been deposed as Patriarch by Basil I in 867, he sought to flatter his way back into favor. He thus invented a fictitious ancestry for Basil, tracing his descent back to Tiridates the Great (298-330 A.D.), the Arsacid ruler of Armenia who first converted to Christianity. The earliest extant formulation of this legendary ancestry is in Leo VI's *Funeral Oration* 141a. For a modern study see G. Moravcsik, 'Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios I.'

Despite the fabulous nature of this invented ancestry, Basil was probably of Armenian descent. His family had been settled in Thrace/Macedonia; see N. Adontz, *Études*

excellent rulers Philip and Alexander.⁴²⁶ Born in Macedonia to parents of no small repute, he was raised by them, just like Achilles by the centaur Cheiron,⁴²⁷ and trained in manly acts of virtue and courage. He was thus known and loved by all. Oddly enough he entered the Queen of cities through the Golden Gate,⁴²⁸ and rested by a neighboring monastery, which is now dedicated to the memory of the martyr Diomedes, but was earlier devoted to Elias.⁴²⁹ He entered the City very much against his mother's wishes.⁴³⁰ He would have been restrained by her, had she not seen a dream which had been interpreted by a specialist in that kind of knowledge. For, as once happened to Mandane, she saw a plant growing to a great height, which decorated her house with flowers.⁴³¹ Its great trunk, as well as its leaves and branches, were covered with gold. And the prophetic interpretation that she had received, supported by an oath, was that her son would not only gain the throne, but would also reign in majesty, establish a long-lasting dynasty, and enrich his native land. In addition to this, [77] she had heard favorable predictions from someone else at a time when her son was playing with his friends in a lake and an eagle flew over his head and covered it with his wings.⁴³² And on another occasion, an old man who used to cough up fire from his mouth, thus

armeno-byzantines, p. 81 ff.; and more recently C. Toumanoff, 'Caucasia and Byzantium,' p. 151.

⁴²⁶ Philip II of Macedon (359-336 B.C.) and his son Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.). Such an ancestry would have been as impossible to verify in the age of Basil as it is today. Theophanes Continuatus (212-216) includes among Basil's ancestors, in addition to those mentioned by Genesios, Constantine the Great.

⁴²⁷ Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 11.830-831, 16.142-143 = 19.389-390. The date of Basil's birth is disputed. Greek sources claim he was born during the reign of Michael I (811-813), but so early a date requires us to believe an old man capable of extraordinary feats of strength, and conflicts with other statements made in the sources (see E. Kislinger, 'Der junge Basileios I. und die Bulgaren,' pp. 142-3). E. W. Brooks, 'The age of Basil I,' postulated 830-835 instead, while N. Adontz (*Études armeno-byzantines*, p. 67) suggested 836. But the earlier date still has supporters (e.g., W. Treadgold, 'The Bulgars' Treaty with the Byzantines in 816,' p. 215, n. 14).

⁴²⁸ Basil's entry into the Capital through this gate, which was used for Imperial processions and triumphs, foreshadows his future glory.

⁴²⁹ For this monastery see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 95-97. The information concerning its previous name is found only in Genesios. At the time of Basil's arrival St Diomedes may have been a church rather than a monastery. Its exact location is not known.

⁴³⁰ Constantine VII gives her name as Pankalo (*De Ceremoniis* 2.42).

⁴³¹ Mandane was the mother of Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire (559-529 B.C.; Herodotus 1.107-108). Genesios is slightly confused. It was Mandane's father Astyages who saw the dream: from his daughter's private parts sprang a vine that covered all of Asia.

⁴³² For the eagle motif and its connection to royalty from antiquity to the time of Genesios see N. Tobias, *Basil I*, pp. 78-85.

intimating that he was Elias,⁴³³ foretold that the child would rule the Empire.

25. So while Basil was resting near the aforementioned monastery, some monk, or, according to others, the abbot himself, saw the martyr in a dream, and was instructed by him to go out to the main entrance and bring inside the man who waited there, who would be Emperor.⁴³⁴ He was to offer him hospitality and clothing, as he would in turn provide for the restoration of the monastery. The monk went outside and found the youth emaciated, filthy, and utterly unkempt on account of his poverty, and concluded that the dream had been a figment of his imagination. Hence he returned inside without providing him with anything. But the martyr immediately appeared to him again and sternly ordered him to go back outside and bring in the Emperor Basil and take proper care of him. The youth responded to the name and was thus brought inside, that he might remember all that he received after he mounted the throne. And Basil was indeed observant of this. For after he donned the Imperial robe, he donated many costly gifts to the revered martyr, and also endowed the monastery with many lands and otherwise restored it.

26. Through the recommendation of the abbot of the monastery, Basil was enrolled in the retinue of a grandee related to the Imperial family, who loved that monastery and visited it often. This man had gathered around himself and supported many manly youths of Basil's age, although they were of lesser quality (for Basil easily surpassed them all), and [78] he was exceedingly proud of this band of his. His name was Theophiliskos. Between him and the Emperor there developed a rivalry over who would collect the most comely and brave youths.⁴³⁵ One day the Caesar sent his beloved son Antigonos to greet Theophiliskos on his behalf, and along with him went Constantine, whom we have mentioned often. When the host had feasted to his satisfaction, he was roused to

⁴³³ No such incident concerning the Prophet can be found in the Old Testament. Many events of his life were, however, accompanied by spectacular fireworks, e.g., 3 Kings 18.2-40 (heavenly fire consumed the offerings); 4 Kings 2.7-13 (taken to heaven in a fiery chariot). For Basil's connection to the Prophet Elias see N. Tobias, *Basil I*, pp. 91-92.

⁴³⁴ St Diomedes may have been a church at this time, rather than a monastery. Other sources say it was the keeper of the church Nicholas, not an abbot, who greeted Basil (see J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 166, n. 3; R. Janin, *EM*, p. 96).

⁴³⁵ Variants of his name are attested, e.g., Theophilion, usually called Theophilites (Theophanes Continuatus 224-225). The way in which he met Basil is also differently told (cf. J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 166-167). For his retinue see, H.-G. Beck, 'Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen,' pp. 10-12.

playfulness and desired to hold games. He invited all who lived in the house and were qualified to wrestle to join the contest. And all the wrestlers of the Emperor and the Caesar were victorious, since Basil was not present at the contest. But he was called to fight, and pitted against the champion of the other team. Constantine was favorably inclined toward him as they were related,⁴³⁶ and he had the floor sprinkled with straw, in order that Basil not slip. The two now closed in on each other. The other attempted to lift Basil off the ground, but he could not counter Basil's resistance and it was he who was lifted up, though bravely, and swirled around very quickly. He was thrown to the ground, "by a *pod-rezian*⁴³⁷ embrace," as the locals say, and was so unmistakably defeated that everyone was highly entertained. But after a while they managed to revive him by pouring buckets of water on him. Antigonos returned with his own men to the Caesar and told him everything that had happened. Eventually the Emperor Michael heard the story and summoned Basil and two others of the same age. When he saw them, he was pleased with their countenance and praised their stature, but he marveled at Basil much more than at the other two. He gave him various honors and promised him many more. For God advances those who He knows will rule and endows them with the symbols of Empire.⁴³⁸ When the Empress Theodora saw them, she ignored the other two, but Basil worried her greatly and she cried out from the bottom of her heart, "How I wish, my child, that I had not seen this man today, who will overturn your rule, as my own blessed husband had foretold when he was still alive."⁴³⁹ Michael

⁴³⁶ Theophanes Continuatus (230) says merely that they were fellow Armenians. For the possible significance of this discrepancy see the Translator's Introduction 2.

⁴³⁷ A Slavonic term, according to J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 167, n. 5. Professor John Fine tells me that it may be derived from 'pod' and 'rezati': to 'under-cut.' E. Kislinger ('Der junge Basileios I. und die Bulgaren,' pp. 147-149) comes to the same conclusion after a review of previous scholarly treatments of the word.

⁴³⁸ Various observations must be made about this incident. First, Bardas was not a Caesar when (if) these events occurred (usually dated to 856: A. Vogt, *Basile I^{er}*, p. 29; N. Adontz, *Études arméno-byzantines*, p. 65). Second, his son Antigonos would have been a child of three at this time, for according to Theophanes Continuatus (180) he was ten years old in 863 (cf. J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 167-168, n. 5). Third, according to Theophanes Continuatus (230) this incident did not lead to Basil's being introduced to Michael III. Fourth, Genesios retells the story in section 4.40 (only he thinks it is a separate occurrence). Some of the details Genesios provides there can be found in Theophanes Continuatus' single description of the event, which is placed at this point in the narrative (for the various versions of Basil's fight see E. Kislinger, 'Der junge Basileios I. und die Bulgaren,' pp. 146-150). The relevant texts (with English translations) and commentary can be found in M. Poliakoff, *Studies in the Terminology of the Greek Combat Sports*, pp. 149-160 (Appendix 5: Basil I, The Wrestler).

⁴³⁹ Cf. section 3.15 above. It was John the Grammarian who made the prophesy, not

appointed Basil Protostates of his cavalry escort,⁴⁴⁰ and gave him a wild horse to tame which he loved greatly. Basil mounted it, as Alexander had once bravely mounted Boukephalas, and Bellerophontes Pegasus, and astounded all who witnessed the act.⁴⁴¹ After this, Imperial favor toward him [79] increased greatly, and he gained concrete advantages. He was soon honored by the title of Patrikios, given a beautiful wife from the noble family of Inger, and was afterwards adopted by the Emperor. Then he became Magistros, was preferred over all the guards who slept in the Imperial chambers,⁴⁴² and finally was raised to the throne.⁴⁴³

27. When on one occasion the Emperor was residing at the palace near the church of the glorious martyr Mamas,⁴⁴⁴ he devised the following plan, even though it was ridiculous. He did not reveal it to all his attendants, but only to two, whom he trusted with knowledge of this secret plan. He returned back to the Imperial City with them and early on the morning of the bright day of the Pentecost, he locked Basil in a room and

Theophilos.

⁴⁴⁰ J. B. Bury dates this promotion to 858-859 (*ERE*, p. 168); R. Guiland ('Patrices des règnes de Theophile et de Michael III,' p. 601) suggests 857.

⁴⁴¹ For Alexander's feat, see Plutarch, *Alexander* 6; for Bellerophontes', see Pindar, *Olympian Ode* 13.63 ff. According to almost all of our other sources, it was this achievement that brought Basil to Michael's attention. For the different versions see N. Adontz, *Études armeno-byzantines*, pp. 63-65.

⁴⁴² I.e., he was appointed 'parakoimomenos,' a position usually held by eunuchs whose job it was to protect the Emperor's bedchamber (see in general R. Guiland, 'La Parakimomène'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 305). According to Constantine VII, Basil did not appoint anyone to the position of parakoimomenos during the whole of his reign (*De Administrando Imperio* 50.225-227).

⁴⁴³ The information in the last two sentences is presented in confused chronological order. Basil gained the title of Patrikios when he became parakoimomenos, probably in 865 (cf. J. B. Bury, *ERE*, p. 169, n. 2; R. Guiland, 'Patrices des règnes de Theophile et de Michael III,' p. 601). His bride was the notorious Eudokia Ingerina, who may have been a mistress of Michael III. According to Cyril Mango, Michael married her to Basil because she was pregnant with his own child, whose birth Michael wanted to legitimize. Basil was forced to divorce his previous wife Maria, and was adopted as co-Emperor so that Eudokia's child could be claimed as a legitimate successor if it turned out to be male ('Eudocia Ingerina, The Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty'; also J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 162, 169). That child was none other than Leo VI. But Basil's paternity has equally able modern defenders (Ch. Toul, 'Περὶ τῆς Νοθογενείας τοῦ Λέοντος τοῦ Σοφοῦ'). This scholar ably contends that Eudokia had not been Michael's mistress and that all of her children were by Basil. E. Kislinger ('Eudokia Ingerina, Basileios I. und Michael III.') depicts Eudokia as ambitious and active in her own right: she had been a mistress of Michael III, but because of the latter's infertility and her recognition of Basil's potential, she conspired with her husband against her former lover. All of her children were therefore Basil's.

In any case, Basil's marriage took place after his appointment to the position of parakoimomenos (as is implied by Theophanes Continuatus 235). He was made co-Emperor on 26 May 866 (see section 4.27 below).

⁴⁴⁴ For this palace see R. Janin, *CP*, p. 140, and cf. section 4.19 above.

ordered his attendants with a nod to strip him naked and stretch out his arms. When his orders were carried out, Basil was shocked and surprised, but, since he possessed a vigorous spirit, he recovered his self-composure and remained calm before the Emperor. The latter gave him thirty stripes with a double whip, and told him that this would serve as a reminder of his own benevolent disposition toward him. And that very morning they went to the Greatest Church and Basil was crowned Emperor before the people on 26 May, of the fourteenth indiction.⁴⁴⁵ He was then given everything that was appropriate for a co-ruler, and along with much affection, Michael granted him an equal, and perhaps a greater, right to rule.

28. Michael's confidence in Basil continued to grow and roused the great envy of many, who now conspired to destroy the harmony and love between Michael and Basil and [80] to turn the one against the other by any means possible. These malicious men thus hoped by means of strife to close the peaceful house of the Lord, alternately employing deceitful words, or letters that masked their malicious intentions.⁴⁴⁶ They thus managed to persuade Michael that he would be violently killed by Basil, and convinced Basil that he would suffer the same fate at the hands of Michael, who had an unsteady character, calling him an empty-minded sot. And some say that Michael was absolutely resolved to kill Basil, and that when the two of them went hunting together, he ordered someone to strike Basil with a spear. Others say that matters were not like that at all, and that Michael continued to be favorably disposed toward Basil, even though others tried to shake his trust. Thus those who supported Basil urged him to kill the Emperor. But as they could not persuade him because he continued to look favorably upon Michael, or because the thought of murder made him swoon, they undertook to kill Michael themselves, fearing that otherwise they would be killed along with Basil.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ I.e., 866. "The Greatest Church" is of course a reference to Hagia Sophia.

⁴⁴⁶ In addition to the machinations alluded to here by Genesios, there was an actual rebellion led by Symbatios in Asia Minor protesting the crowning of Basil. Symbatios had helped Basil to murder Bardas (see section 4.23 above), but had not expected Basil to be raised to the throne as a result. See B. Blysidou, *EΠ*, pp. 28-32, who interprets this revolt as the first in a series aimed against Basil and his policies.

⁴⁴⁷ Basil and his accomplices murdered Michael on the night of 23-24 September 867. Michael was twenty-eight years old (cf. C. Mango, 'When was Michael III Born?' p. 254); cf. also the narrative reconstruction in J. B. Bury, *ERE*, pp. 176-17. Basil employed the same band of murderers against Michael that he did against Bardas, and all of them died in mysterious circumstances after Basil took control of the throne; see B. Blysidou, *EΠ*, pp. 35-36. Genesios naturally suppresses all these facts.

29. Basil used the murder to his own advantage, as he believed that, contrary to his previous elevation, God himself had now given him the right to rule.⁴⁴⁸ He gave thanks to Him and inaugurated the church of the archangels, the commanders of the heavenly hosts, which he had built to be admirable and beautiful on account of its size and luxurious adornment.⁴⁴⁹ After it had been completed in accordance with the desire and faith of the Emperor, its dedication was piously carried out and a spiritual assembly was convened. Basil received the Imperial crown from the hands of the Patriarch, thus establishing his own dynasty on the throne, which he had gained with the support of the archangels.⁴⁵⁰ Three of his sons, Constantine, Leo, and Alexander, he crowned co-Emperors,⁴⁵¹ while he designated Stephen as the future successor to the Patriarchal throne.⁴⁵² The first son died afterwards against all expectation and caused Basil much grief.⁴⁵³ For he had paid more attention to this son [81] than to the others and had hoped that he would succeed him on the throne. But it was not to be. So Basil decreed that his successors were to be Leo, the most famous and noble Emperor, and after him his brother Alexander.⁴⁵⁴ But malicious men managed to curb natural affection, and Basil's fatherly love for Leo cooled a little.⁴⁵⁵ But the attacks of calumny

⁴⁴⁸ The murder of Michael was met with another reaction against Basil on the part of some high officials, which was however quickly put down. See B. Blysidou, *ΕΠ*, pp. 27-28, 32.

⁴⁴⁹ This was the famous Nea Ekklesia, the 'New Church,' located in the palace complex and dedicated on 1 May 880 (A. Vogt, *Basile I^{er}*, p. 398, n. 4). For this church see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 361-364, and the corrections in R. Jenkins and C. Mango, 'The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius.' See also, in general, P. Magdalino, 'Observations on the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I.'

⁴⁵⁰ Basil had already been crowned by Michael in 866 and there would have been no need for such a ceremony as is described here by Genesios (cf. the discussion by M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 156-157, who suggests various possibilities).

⁴⁵¹ Constantine is claimed by most scholars to have been the son of Basil's first wife Maria, although according to Ch. Toul (Περὶ τῆς Νοθογενείας τοῦ Λέοντος τοῦ Σοφοῦ) his mother was Eudokia. He was crowned on 6 January 869, Leo on 6 January 870, and Alexander c. 879 after the death of Constantine. None of the ceremonies could therefore have taken place in the Nea Ekklesia.

⁴⁵² Stephen I (886-893) was Patriarch under his brother Leo VI (886-912), and was less than twenty years old when he took office (cf. R. Jenkins, 'The Chronological Accuracy of the "Logothete" for the Years A.D. 867-913,' p. 99).

⁴⁵³ Constantine died at the age of about twenty on 3 September 879 (F. Halkin, 'Trois dates précisées grace au Synaxaire,' pp. 14-17).

⁴⁵⁴ Alexander ruled after Leo from 11 May 912 to 6 June 913.

⁴⁵⁵ Leo was arrested by his father on the suspicion of high treason. He was imprisoned for three years (883-886), and narrowly escaped being blinded (for the dates, see R. Jenkins, 'The Chronological Accuracy of the "Logothete" for the Years A.D. 867-913,' pp.

were cut short as there was no substance to them, and the informants were exiled. Leo succeeded to the throne and, being a noble and wise man, carried out the instructions of his father. But all these things happened after the death of his father.

30. Because all of these scandals that we have described rocked the state, military affairs had been neglected for some time. The Ishmaelites became even more haughty and launched a massive invasion that reached to the Malagena,⁴⁵⁶ where they took possession of the Imperial horses. This proved to be an eternal monument to their strategic skills, but let us remain silent concerning our defenses. When news of the attack was related to the Emperor crowned by God, he did not back down in such unexpected circumstances, but energetically prepared to take a fitting revenge for all that had been done. He considered a man named Andreas, who was intelligent and who sought experience and the opportunity to prove his bravery, even though he kept his qualities a secret, as the course of events would prove (he came from the Scythian lands of the west). Basil appointed him second in command of the Opsikion theme. Andreas managed his forces expertly, attacked the enemy, and won a great victory, which decreased their arrogance for the meantime. Because of this victory and his many other acts of bravery, he was made a Patrikios and given the command of the Scholai. And since he continued to campaign against the enemy, and won many victories, he was later appointed to be Magistros.⁴⁵⁷

31. Not long afterwards, our enemies from Tephrike grew haughty against us, seizing the opportunity to attack us [82] when our forces were busy fighting against the Agarenoi by land and by sea. But the Emperor

101-103). For a closely political interpretation of Leo's imprisonment see B. Blysidou, *EΠ*, pp. 164-189, who suggests that Leo was framed by Photios and his supporters. E. Kislinger ('Eudokia Ingerina, Basileios I. und Michael III.', pp. 131-132) proposes "generation-conflict" as the cause of friction between Basil and his son. A month after Leo's release Basil was killed in a hunting accident, probably murdered (A. Vogt, 'La jeunesse de Léon VI le Sage,' pp. 426-428).

⁴⁵⁶ A fortified camp in Bithynia, whose strategic location made it an ideal stopping point and supply depot for Byzantine troops traveling to and from Constantinople (see S. Şahin, 'Malagina/Melagina am Sangarios').

⁴⁵⁷ For the career of Andreas, who was probably of Slavic descent, see R. Guillard, 'Patrices des règnes de Basile Ier et de Léon VI,' pp. 300-301. The events described in this section occurred late in 878 (the year Syracuse fell: see section 4.33 below); the victory was won at Podandos in Cilicia, and the enemy was the emir of Tarsos: see A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, pp. 82-85; and F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien* (= *TIB* v. 2), pp. 261-262. B. Blysidou (*EΠ*, pp. 88-90) dates his elevation to Magistros to 886.

defeated these arrogant people as he was aided both by God and the experience of his generals. With them he attacked both Germanikeia and Samosata, which were famous cities and lands of the Saracens, and also hemmed in Melitene with constant raids. He set up monuments to commemorate his splendid victories against these places and returned to the Imperial City.⁴⁵⁸

32. But the naval forces of Africa were not at peace with us either. They conquered all of the west, including a large number of the cities of Sicily and Longibardia, excepting Gallerianon,⁴⁵⁹ a total of 150. The Emperor Basil recovered them, when Nasar and Prokopios were Strategoi.⁴⁶⁰ As for the name Italy, it was taken from Italos, the father of Sikelos. The father conquered Italy, the son Sikania or Trinakria.⁴⁶¹ On the other hand, Italy may be named after a cow who traveled to that land. When the locals saw her suddenly as she was swimming toward them from the op-

⁴⁵⁸ Basil's wars against the Paulicians are described in more detail in sections 4.34-37 below. For Basil's campaigns against the particular cities listed in this section, see P. Lemerle, 'Pauliciens,' pp. 103-108: in 873 he took Samosata but failed to capture Melitene; in 878 he attacked Germanikeia, although he did not capture it, but managed to destroy Tephrike, the Paulician capital (the triumph he celebrated after this last campaign was recorded by Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis*, Appendix to Book 1, cols. 941-956). For Tephrike, see the glossary under 'Paulicians'; for Samosata, see section 4.13 above; for Melitene, see section 3.13 above. For the history of Germanikeia during the ninth-century, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 6, pt. 1, pp. 505-510.

⁴⁵⁹ Genesios may be referring to the Sikel town of Galeria (for which see Diodoros 16.67.3-4, 19.104.1-2; it is also called Galaria by some scholars following the variants in Stephen of Byzantium s.v. Γαλάρηνα). Some of the town's coins bear the name CAΛΑΡΙ-ΝΟΝ (see B. V. Head, *Historia Numorum*, p. 139 s.v. Galaria). I cannot explain why Genesios, or any of his sources, would think that the Byzantines held on to this insignificant little town. For an alternative interpretation see J. B. Bury, 'The Treatise De Administrando Imperio,' p. 550. He suggests that, despite the fact that according to Genesios "Gallerianon" was *not* taken by the Arabs, the name referred to an Arab fortress which later gave its name to the Italian river Garigliano (in western Campania).

⁴⁶⁰ This section refers to events that occurred *after* the fall of Syracuse (in 878), which is the subject of the following section (4.32). In 880 (A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, p. 96) or 879 (R. Guiland, 'Les patrices stratèges byzantins en Italie méridionale,' p. 379) Nasar (as Droungarios) was given a fleet with orders to repel the Arabs who were raiding the Ionian sea. His expedition is described at greater length in section 4.34 (the reader should consult that section for further references). Genesios has yet again split one event into two, and interposed a third between them. For the operations and death of Prokopios in South Italy in 880, see A. Vogt, *Basile I^{er}*, p. 335; A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, p. 109; B. Blysidou, *ΕΠ*, pp. 42-44. He was a Protovestarios, for which office see (R. Guiland, 'Le Protovestiaire'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 305).

⁴⁶¹ Alternate names for Sicily: Thucydides 6.2; Strabo 6.2.1, 6.2.4; Stephen of Byzantium s.v. Τρινακρία, Σικελία. *Trinacria* was the Latin version of Homer's 'Thrinakia,' the island on which Helios pastured his flocks (*Odyssey* 11.107). Many ancient Greek authors ascribed the name of Italy to a hero named Italos (see E. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*, c. 1).

posite shore fleeing her owners, they called out, "italos, italos," which in their language means 'cow'.⁴⁶² But another possibility is that it was named after a robber named Italos who was killed there by Hercules. Longibarbia was named after some Longibarb⁴⁶³ who first conquered that land, since he had a long beard. For in the language of the Longibarbs *longe* means 'long' and *barba* 'beard'.⁴⁶⁴

33. The misfortunes suffered by Syracuse had occurred some years earlier, for it had been besieged by the Ishmaelites. The Emperor had sent the brave Adrianos with a large fleet to free it.⁴⁶⁵ He reached the Peloponnese and docked at a port called Hierax.⁴⁶⁶ He was confined there [83] by bad weather for fifty days. And while he was there, in a very bad mood because of his confinement by the winds, a respectable citizen brought him the bad news that Syracuse had fallen on the fifth hour of the previous day.⁴⁶⁷ The city took its name either from its founders Syra and Kosse, the daughters of Archias, or from a nearby lake, or from a spring that was earlier called Syrakous, but now Arethousa.⁴⁶⁸ Adrianos

⁴⁶² For this etiology see the sources cited by W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, p. 184 and n. 24. Some scholars believe that the name of Italy was derived from the Oscan word *vitelliu* which means 'calf-land' (see A. Boak, *A History of Rome to 565 A.D.*, p. 7).

⁴⁶³ I.e., Lombard.

⁴⁶⁴ *Barba* is beard in Latin; *longa* is long. For the sources for the origin of the name see J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, v. 2, p. 299, n. 1. The Byzantines sometimes used the term Longobardia/Langobardia to refer to a theme of theirs which included Apulia.

⁴⁶⁵ Sicily had first been invaded by the Arabs in the mid-seventh century, but they did not establish a permanent foothold until 830 (for the fighting in Sicily from their invasion under Michael II up to the expedition of Adrianos, see A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 1, pp. 61-88, 127-137, 187-188, 204-208, 219-222, 260-264, v. 2, pp. 21-26, 50-52; and W. Treadgold, *BR*, pp. 248-258, 273-276, 285-286, 292-296, 305-306, 319-321; for a more continuous, though summary and often inaccurate, account see A. Ahmad, *A History of Islamic Sicily*, pp. 1-24; also N. Tobias, *Basil I*, pp. 342-382). This section of Genesios refers to the siege of Syracuse by the Arabs in the summer of 877, which was to result in a Byzantine defeat (A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, pp. 70-79). For Adrianos' career, see R. Guiland, 'Les patrices stratèges byzantins en Italie méridionale de l'avènement de Basile I^{er} à la mort de Léon VI (867-912),' p. 378; 'Les patrices byzantins sous le règne de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète (913-959),' p. 189.

⁴⁶⁶ Hierax was a port north of Monemvasia (Theophanes Continuatus 310), on the southeastern coast of the Peloponnese (see H. A. Kalligas, *Byzantine Monemvasia: The Sources*, map on p. xvi).

⁴⁶⁷ Syracuse fell on 21 May 878. The siege was described by the eye-witness Theodosios the Monk, whose complete work has been preserved only in Latin translation (see A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, p. 71, n. 6).

⁴⁶⁸ For similar etiologies see Plutarch, *Love Stories* 2 (= *Moralia* 773B); Georgios Choroiboskos v. 2, p. 242. For the famous spring of Arethusa see Cicero, *In Verrem* 2.4.53.118; Pausanias 5.7.2-3; a photograph of the spring can be found in R. J. A. Wilson, *Sicily under the Roman Empire*, p. 163.

pressed the man in order to discover the truth of the matter and asked him how he came about this information. The latter replied that, "I own some property eight miles away from here in a region called Helos."⁴⁶⁹ Last night some shepherds approached me while I was inspecting my farm and told me that they had heard from some local demons that Syracuse had been taken. The demons claimed to have been present when the city fell, and hence their report was to be accepted as true." Adrianos was rather skeptical of the whole story and refused to believe it, wanting to hear it for himself. So he went to the farm and around the first hour visited the specific location pointed out to him by the shepherds, where they claimed the spirits made their home. When one of the shepherds inquired as to their identity, the spirits replied that they were in the city of Syracuse and had been filled by the Christian blood spilled there; they would know him who sought to learn what had happened there, including his name and rank. But Adrianos did not believe them, considering them to be untrustworthy. And fifteen days later what were considered false claims were confirmed as true by those who had barely managed to escape from Syracuse. The memory of the prediction by the local spirits, or rather of their knowledge of things that had already happened, is said to have lasted until the reign of the Emperor Leo.⁴⁷⁰ The admiral then gathered his fleet and returned to Constantinople, and sought asylum in a church, begging to be forgiven for his error. But he was not forgiven, as his failure was due to neglect of duty, rather than to bad weather, as he claimed.⁴⁷¹

34. At the same time the African Saracens from Carthage armed sixty giant ships, each containing 200 men, [84] and sailed against Kephallenia and went as far as Zakynthos,⁴⁷² which took its name from Zakynthos the son of Merops⁴⁷³ and lies in the direction of the Zephyr

⁴⁶⁹ Near Sparta, according to Homer, *Iliad* 584, 594; on the coast of the Laconic Gulf, according to Thucydides 4.54 and Strabo 8.3.12; a city, territory, marsh, or village, according to Strabo 8.3.25, 8.5.2 ('helos' means marsh in Greek). It was about twenty (modern) miles from Monemvasia, but modern roads make the distance considerably longer.

⁴⁷⁰ Leo VI (886-912).

⁴⁷¹ The intervention of the Patriarch Photios saved Adrianos from the death penalty. He was exiled instead. B. Blysidou (*EII*, pp. 37-39) interprets Adrianos' procrastination as an instance of wider disaffection with Basil's western policies on the part of many high officials. She notes that the Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos (901-907, 912-925) placed the blame for the fall of Syracuse solely on the shoulders of the admiral (*Letter* 75.58-60).

⁴⁷² For Byzantine Kephallenia and Zakynthos, see P. Soustal with J. Koder, *Nikopolis und Kephallēnia* (= *TIB* v. 3), pp. 175-177 and 278-280 respectively. I have preserved Genesios' spelling "Kephallenia."

⁴⁷³ Merops was a ruler of a city in the Troad in the time of the Trojan War; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 2.828-834; Apollodoros, *Bibliotheca* 3.12.5; Apollonios Rhodios, *Argonautica*

wind,⁴⁷⁴ in the region of the so-called Ichthys.⁴⁷⁵ When he learned of these events, the Emperor dispatched a fleet under the command of the Patrikios Nasar, a widely experienced man. When he reached Methone, which used to be called Pedasos,⁴⁷⁶ most of the sailors fled from the ships and abandoned him.⁴⁷⁷ He immediately informed the Emperor, who in turn hastened to send a messenger with instructions to build wooden spikes on the spot and impale all the deserters on them. He contrived to have this message delivered publicly, but at night he secretly took thirty captive Agarenoi from prison and gave them to the Droungarios who commanded his personal bodyguard,⁴⁷⁸ making sure that anyone who revealed the plan would be punished severely. He then ordered that the beards of the thirty Agarenoi, as well as their hair, be tarred and set on fire. He also had their faces smeared with soot and their feet tightly tied with a double chain. On a certain hour of a pre-arranged day he had them severely whipped in the hippodrome as though they were deserters from the navy. They then suffered the ridicule imposed on convicted runaways, namely, they were carried through the City naked and mounted on mules all the way to the Golden Gate. Efforts were made to ensure that none of the bystanders approached or talked to them. When these things had been carried out, the men were taken to Methone to be impaled as cowardly deserters of war, and neither the local nobles nor the common people nor even the commander of the fleet were let in on the secret. And all the prisoners were impaled. This caused great mourning among the Patrikios Nasar and his subordinates, as they considered themselves responsible for the flight of their own men and Basil's messenger assured them that the Emperor would execute the wives, children, and even the parents

1.974-977; Strabo 13.1.7. Zakynthos was the son of Dardanos, not Merops (Pausanias 8.24.3; Stephen of Byzantium s.v. Ζάκυνθος), but Dardanos may have married a daughter of Merops (*ibid.* s.v. 'Αρίσβη).

⁴⁷⁴ Zephyr was the name of the west wind and of the god of that wind; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 16.148-151.

⁴⁷⁵ According to Strabo (17.3.20) a location on the coast of the Peloponnese (cf. also Agathemerios, *Geographiae Informatio* 24).

⁴⁷⁶ Strabo (8.4.3) and Pausanias (4.35.1) attribute to Methone the Homeric name of Pedasos (cf. *Iliad* 9.152, 294). It was an important port on the southwestern extremity of the Peloponnese, on the naval route which linked Byzantium and the west.

⁴⁷⁷ Genesisios here picks up from section 4.32 (see the notes to that section). For the context of sailor desertion and general resistance to Basil's policies which surrounds the events described in this section see B. Blysidou, *ΕΠ*, pp. 40-42, 66-77. According to Blysidou, Nasar was one of the 'new men' Basil was forced to employ and promote in order to further his western policies and counter the resistance of many high officials. For Nasar's activities and successes in the west see A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, pp. 96-99.

⁴⁷⁸ I.e., Droungarios of the Vigla. For the men known to have held that position under Basil see R. Guiland, 'Le Drongaire et le Grand Drongaire de la Veille,' p. 347.

of all who had fled. Hence through this brilliant plan and the execution of a few Agarenoi our own people were spared. For the admiral, his officers, [85] and the entire army were horrified by the thought that they might suffer the same fate, and were compelled to sail against their enemies, who were boasting of their previous victory in their barbarian manner and investing Zakynthos. So Nasar attacked them, and through the divine power and the prayers of the Emperor, he utterly destroyed them. As our fleet was breaking the Agarene formation, a loud voice was heard from a valley ordering our ships to advance further. They thus overran all of Sicily, Africa, and also Longibardia, burning the Agarene ships with 'Military Fire' and killing their crews with every kind of weapon. They captured mercantile ships, more of them in fact than could easily be calculated, that were loaded with every kind of merchandise, especially oil, which became so abundant that in those days it sold for an obol per liter.⁴⁷⁹ These victories seemed marvelous to all, especially on account of the multitude of Tephrike, and of Paul of Samosata, and with him of Koubrex, Montanos, and various other heresiarchs.⁴⁸⁰ For earlier they were insolent, but now they were destroyed by the strong arm of God and the frequent efforts and prayers of the Emperor. He repeatedly marched out against them, and managed at first to devastate all their lands by burning them and taking prisoner. He then assaulted Tephrike, and the enterprise lasted for some time. As he could not capture it he returned to the Imperial City, entered the church of the archangels which he had built, and begged them in obvious distress and grief not to let him die before he had utterly destroyed Tephrike.⁴⁸¹ And he immediately marched out against them with a large army and devastated their lands. Meanwhile Tephrike had been destroyed, as the heavens had raged against it so horribly that its buildings had been shattered and the frightened inhabitants believed that this misfortune had been sent specifically against them by

⁴⁷⁹ Genesios' account gives the impression that the Byzantine expedition was a mere raid, when in fact it returned to Byzantine authority a number of forts in Italy; see the discussion of the possible bias of Genesios (or his sources) in B. Blysidou, *EII*, pp. 77-81.

⁴⁸⁰ Paul of Samosata was a Bishop of Antioch in the late third century, and was eventually condemned for heresy and arrogance, and expelled from his position. The Paulicians were often depicted as his followers (see N. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 210 ff. and *passim*). 'Koubrex' is probably Mani (see *ibid.* index s.v. 'Kumbrikios'). Montanos was a Phrygian prophetic heretic of the late second century. Genesios obviously did not believe that these heretics were active in the ninth century, but rather that the inhabitants of Tephrike were their followers.

⁴⁸¹ This story is legendary as the Church was not completed until 880 (see section 4.29 above), well after the final defeat of the Paulicians. Basil's first and unsuccessful campaign against Tephrike is dated to 871 (A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, p. 33; P. Lemerle, 'Pauliciens,' p. 103).

God. Therefore some of them went over to the Emperor's side and begged him for mercy, while others migrated further into the interior of Syria, and as a result of both movements the city was left with almost no inhabitants. Thus it was taken, since its ruler Chreisocheir had been thoroughly terrified.⁴⁸²

[86] 35. This arrogant man, along with Karbaïas and Kallistos, had inflicted the worst misfortunes upon the Christians, just as his father had.⁴⁸³ His raids reached as far as Nikomedeia and Nikaia itself, but he also moved against the Thrakesion theme. When he reached as far as the district of John the Theologian, his soldiers entered St John's church with their horses and baggage and thus defiled the holy place.⁴⁸⁴ The Emperor wrote to Chreisocheir proposing peace, as he was truly a peaceful and merciful man, in accordance with the following quotation: "Be generous and compassionate to one another, and forgive each other, just as Christ gave himself to us."⁴⁸⁵ He bade him rest content with all that he had gained, and in exchange for gifts of gold, silver, and clothing, he should stop enslaving and butchering Christians. But the arrogant infidel was not persuaded by these words of peace. Hence he wrote back to the Emperor, saying, "If you want to make peace with me, O Emperor, renounce your eastern possessions and content yourselves with the western ones. Then I will make peace with you. Otherwise we will exert all our energy to destroy you and your Empire." Realizing the mindlessness of the man, the

⁴⁸² Chreisocheir ('Golden-hand') was the nephew and son-in-law of Karbeas, and succeeded him in leading the military operations of the Paulicians against the Empire (for Chreisocheir see P. Lemerle, 'Pauliciens,' pp. 96-103). Although Basil's first attack on Tephrike is historical (see previous note), the second, as described here by Genesios, is not. The earthquake (?) is probably a completely legendary event. According to A. Vasiliev et al. (BA, v. 2, pp. 34, 38-39) Tephrike fell to the Domestikos Christopher, whose victorious campaign of 872 against Chreisocheir is described by Genesios in sections 4.36-37 below. But P. Lemerle demonstrated that Tephrike fell to Basil in 878 ('Pauliciens,' pp. 103-108). Chreisocheir thus died six years before his city was taken.

⁴⁸³ For Karbeas (the leader of the Paulicians before Chreisocheir), Kallistos, and Chreisocheir's father (possibly named John) see *ibid.* pp. 41-42, 85-96. According to B. Blysidou, (EII, pp. 78-81) Genesios belonged to a group which believed that the true interests of the Empire lay in the East. That is why he emphasized the difficulties faced by Basil's western policies, downplayed its occasional successes, and concentrated on the description of eastern affairs (but for some problems with this theory, see the Translator's Introduction 4).

⁴⁸⁴ St John was associated with Ephesos since ancient times, where he was supposed to have traveled and worked miracles. For the church desecrated by the Paulicians see A. Vasiliev, BA, v. 2, p. 27, n. 2. This raid by Chreisocheir is dated to before 869 (P. Lemerle, 'Pauliciens,' p. 103).

⁴⁸⁵ Genesios misquotes Ephesians 4.32, producing an awkward construction.

Emperor responded with philosophical silence, and never wrote back to Chreisocheir.⁴⁸⁶

36. Two years later Chreisocheir marched with his own armies all the way to the city of Ankyra and to the Kommata themselves,⁴⁸⁷ gathered a great amount of loot for himself and turned back to return home. The commander of the Scholai,⁴⁸⁸ keeping a distance of one mile, contrived to follow him, but was careful not to go closer and reveal his presence. Chreisocheir reached the Charsianon theme and encamped near Agrana, while the Domestikoi encamped near Siboron.⁴⁸⁹ He ordered the Strategoi of the Armeniakon and Charsianon theme to "gather the officers under your command, your best cavalry forces, and provisions for twelve days, and follow Chreisocheir as far as Bathryrax.⁴⁹⁰ If he divides his forces and dispatches a vulnerable contingent against either the Armeniakon or the Charsianon theme, let me know. When he leaves Bathryrax, turn back and return to us." [87] Around nightfall Chreisocheir moved his army and encamped in a low-lying region, while the Strategoi occupied a place called Zogoloenon which lay at the juncture between two hills.⁴⁹¹ This place was framed by a rocky cliff that made it inaccessible, and contained a thick forest. While the army was resting there, a manly dispute arose when the officers began to contend among themselves over who were stronger, those of the Armeniakon or those of the Charsianon theme.

⁴⁸⁶ The exchange described in this section alludes to the embassy to Tephrike of Peter of Sicily in 869-870. Peter later wrote a *History of the Paulicians* arguing that they were Manicheans (for his nine-month embassy and subsequent work see A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, pp. 26-32; P. Lemerle, 'Pauliciens,' pp. 17-26). The value of his testimony is called into question by N. Garsoïan (*The Paulician Heresy*, p. 55 ff.).

⁴⁸⁷ The Kommata were a region in southern Galatia; see A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, p. 34 and n. 2; also K. Belke with M. Restle, *Galatien und Lykaonien* (= *TIB* v. 4), p. 193; for Byzantine Ankyra, see *ibid.* pp. 126-130. Chreisocheir's raid (which was to prove his last) took place in 872 (P. Lemerle, 'Pauliciens,' p. 103). Before it, and after the unsuccessful embassy of Peter of Sicily in 869-870 (alluded to by Genesios in section 4.35), Basil himself had unsuccessfully attacked Tephrike (in 871). Genesios mentions this attack in the second half of section 4.34, which contains a poor summary of Basil's wars against the Paulicians.

⁴⁸⁸ His name was Christopher (A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, p. 34; for a narrative of the defeat of Chreisocheir, see pp. 35-38). Genesios seems to be a reliable source for the following events.

⁴⁸⁹ For these locations within the Charsianon theme, see F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien* (= *TIB* v. 2), pp. 76, 81, 137, 276. For the route from Ankyra to Melitene followed by the two armies, including all the locations mentioned here by Genesios (and a detailed map), see F. Hild, *Das byzantinische Strassensystem in Kappadokien*, pp. 104-112. The commander of the tagma of the Scholai was called a Domestikoi.

⁴⁹⁰ I.e., 'deep river.' For a discussion of its location, see F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien* (= *TIB* v. 2), pp. 157-158.

⁴⁹¹ For this location, see *ibid.* p. 157.

When the Charsianitai were arguing that the prize should go them rather than to their rivals, they received the following answer from the Armenia-koi. "Why are we arguing over bravery with words? We can settle the dispute by attacking the enemy. And then it will be clear which of the two of us is braver than the other." When the Strategoi heard about the rivalry between the men, taking into account the rank and file's readiness and desire to fight, which corresponded to their own, they gathered their forces and said, "O you rivals, are you willing, with God's help, to attack the enemy?" The brave-hearted response they received was "Yes! And to this effect we bind you⁴⁹² with an oath on the Emperor's noble head: we will fight against them. For the place in which we have encamped is very defensible. Hence if we attack and win, that victory will be our trophy. If we do not win, we will not be hurt by them." The Strategoi then selected six hundred men, and left the rest in the commanders' tents with the military banners, and instructed them as follows. "We will approach their camp at running speed, and when they turn to face us, we will join battle with them. If, however, they charge out against us, rush out and make a lot of noise as though you were a great army charging with a cry. Make them believe that the commander of the Scholai and the thematic armies are attacking them." Having given these instructions, the Strategoi crept up close to the enemy and attacked to the sound of war drums before the full light of day shone forth. But some of the enemy, with Chreisocheir⁴⁹³ while others were unloading baggage. As the enemy forces were thus divided, the Strategoi and the officers under their command attacked them, crying out "Victory to the Cross" as loudly as if it were the beat of a war drum. The enemy was routed by the sudden attack [88] and turned to flee, without even waiting to see who had attacked them. They were chased from Bathryyax for thirty miles up to the mountain called Constantine,⁴⁹⁴ and suffered heavy losses.

37. As for Chreisocheir, he sought refuge in flight taking with him a few of his soldiers. But Poullades caught up with him. He had this celebrated name because he always wore a felt cap.⁴⁹⁵ He had once been a prisoner in Tephrike and had become quite friendly with Chreisocheir. When he saw the latter, he recognized him and called out loudly, "O

⁴⁹² This might be a mistake in the text: the correct reading is probably "bind ourselves," i.e., ἡμᾶς rather than ὑμᾶς.

⁴⁹³ There is a lacuna in the text here.

⁴⁹⁴ See *ibid.* pp. 81, 157.

⁴⁹⁵ πῖλος in Greek.

Strategoi! O Domestikos of the Scholai! Come here!" Chreisocheir left and said, "O wretched Poullades! What harm have I done you? To the contrary, I have done many things to help you. Go away, and do not try to stop me." The other man replied, "I know, Chreisocheir, that you have done many good things for me and I pray to my Savior God that on this day I may repay you." Chreisocheir was on horseback and came up against a ditch across which his horse refused to jump. He thus paid less attention to Poullades and looked ahead, trying not fall into the ditch. And Poullades struck him from behind with his spear, under his armpit. The force of the blow alarmed Chreisocheir's horse, which threw him to the ground. Then, his most trusted attendant, whose name was Diakonitzes, dismounted (whom Leo, the revered Emperor, appointed mensourator, as it is called in the language of the Romans, after he had abandoned for the better the loathsome religion of the Paulicians).⁴⁹⁶ This man took Chreisocheir's head and placed it in his lap trying to offer him some relief. The Strategoi found him thus and, cutting off Chreisocheir's head, immediately sent it to Lord Basil, crowned by God, as a gift.

38. The Emperor was so attentive in all of his many activities to anything that concerned the public good, [89] that even during the weeks of fasting, and long after the Senators had left the palace, he would enter the sekreton,⁴⁹⁷ where the public accounts were held, and there he would efficiently clear up any difficulties that emerged.

39. Lord Basil was also a highly competent hunter, sphere-thrower, weight-lifter, and jumper. Indeed he could hunt better than a centaur, throw a sphere farther than the athletes of King Alkinoos,⁴⁹⁸ wrestle better than Aristaios⁴⁹⁹ and Aiakos,⁵⁰⁰ and was even the equal of

⁴⁹⁶ Diakonitzes served Basil in Italy in 885, leading a contingent of Paulicians under the command of the general Nikephoros Phokas: A. Vogt, *Basile I^{er}*, p. 336; A. Vasiliev, *BA*, v. 2, p. 110; B. Blysidou, *EII*, pp. 48-49. There were two kinds of mensourator (from Latin *mensura*, a measuring): see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, p. 129.

⁴⁹⁷ This is the genikon sekreton, the bureau in charge of the tax registers and the collection of State revenues: see R. Guillard, 'Les Logothètes,' pp. 11-24; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, pp. 313-314.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 8.370-372.

⁴⁹⁹ The son of Apollo and Cyrene, he became a god through the benefits he conferred upon mankind. He was known mostly as a healer. According to A. Diller ('Nonnus *Dionysiaca* in Genesius *Regna*'), Genesios took the names of various heroes of Greek mythology from Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*. If this is true, he has ascribed qualities to them that are not noted in that work (for Aristaios see Nonnos 13.253 ff.).

⁵⁰⁰ The son of Zeus and Aigina (a daughter of the river Asopos); see Nonnos 13.201 ff.

Hercules in this respect, could jump higher than Achilles,⁵⁰¹ and could lift weights with his hands more easily than Hector. Hence the following poetic words were fully applicable to him, even though devious Zeus did not lighten his load when it came to weight-lifting:

“two men, the best in all a community
could not easily hoist it up from the ground to a wagon,
of such men as are now, but he alone lifted it and shook it”⁵⁰²

In throwing the discus he surpassed Alimedes⁵⁰³ and Odysseus,⁵⁰⁴ his horsemanship surpassed that of Erechtheus⁵⁰⁵ and Kelmes,⁵⁰⁶ he boxed better than Eurymedon and Alkmon,⁵⁰⁷ ran faster than Aristomedon,⁵⁰⁸ Diktaios,⁵⁰⁹ and Priasos,⁵¹⁰ and was a much more accurate shot with a bow than Hymenaios⁵¹¹ and Asterios.⁵¹² I will describe only a few of his achievements in these fields.

40. One day when the Emperor was hunting, a large deer bolted out from the forest. The Emperor threw his club and hit its hind legs, shattering them. He did the same thing on another occasion against a wolf.⁵¹³ When they played ball in the courtyard of the palace or in an area where competitions from horseback took place, he never [90] missed the ball, even though many were competing against him trying to interfere with his

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 21.269, 302.

⁵⁰² Homer, *Iliad* 12.447-449.

⁵⁰³ Cf. Nonnos 14.60.

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 8.186 f.

⁵⁰⁵ Legendary king of Athens; cf. Nonnos 13.171 ff.

⁵⁰⁶ Properly Skelmis, one of the Telchines, who were Rhodian sorcerers; cf. *ibid.* 14.39.

⁵⁰⁷ Eurymethon was the leader of the Giants who fought against the Olympian gods. But Nonnos (14.22) claims that Alkon and Eurymethon were sons of the god Hephaistos. It is impossible to tell whether Genesios is referring to this Alkon, or to Alkmaion, the son of the seer Amphiaraos.

⁵⁰⁸ The son of Lykos, father of Zacynthos, and grandfather of Perseus; cf. Stephen of Byzantium s.v. Βάρκη.

⁵⁰⁹ An epithet of Zeus, from the mountain Dikte, in Crete; cf. Strabo 10.4.12.

⁵¹⁰ An Argonaut; cf. Nonnos 13.511 ff.

⁵¹¹ Hymen, or Hymenaios, a beautiful youth who served also as a god of marriage; cf. *ibid.* 13.84.

⁵¹² King of Crete; cf. *ibid.* 13.222 ff.

⁵¹³ This passage of Genesios was eventually copied into later Byzantine epics; see H. Grégoire, ‘Le tombeau et la date de Digénis Akritas,’ pp. 492-493 (and cf. section 4.15 above).

game. And he played ball so successfully and vigorously that he would often throw it clear through the courtyard, well past the goal and entirely out of sight. The ruler of the Bulgarians boasted that one of his wrestlers was invincible in the arena.⁵¹⁴ He sent this man to the Imperial City, full of hopes that he would prevail. The Emperor could not bear this affront, but he changed his mood to joy by entering the arena himself to fight against this man, with the necessary secrecy of course. Taking off his imperial attire he closed on his opponent. The Scythian failed entirely in his attempt to lift up the Macedonian. But the latter grabbed him readily with his strong hands, twirled him about by his neck, and threw him so forcefully against the ground that it required many buckets of water, much wine, and even drops of rose-water to revive him. For it seemed that he had almost died, and bled from his ears and nose. All who were present greatly marveled at the event, and the story is told even today.

41. He was a generous benefactor of the poor, spending lavish amounts of money on charity. He also built many hospitals, homes for old people, and many kinds of dwellings for the poor. But he did not confine himself to this, but restored and decorated many holy churches that had fallen to ruin out of neglect. Hence he was not only concerned with the health and care of the body, but also with those of the soul. And he did not consider it advantageous for all the people who gathered in the market, which was called the “*phoros*” of Constantine,⁵¹⁵ to be solely occupied with material concerns and to neglect God. Hence he built a church there, where the holy Mother of God is honored publicly. It was modest in size but without rival in beauty.⁵¹⁶

[91] 42. Such a man was the magnificent Lord Basil, and those were his great deeds. He was seized with a wasting diarrhea of the intestine after he fell from his horse on a hunt.⁵¹⁷ He died when a burning fever consumed and evaporated the organic moistness necessary for life. He

⁵¹⁴ Genesios has produced a doublet of Basil’s wrestling match. The incident really occurred before Basil met Michael III (and it is described in section 4.26). The details given here should supplement the earlier account.

⁵¹⁵ I.e., *forum*.

⁵¹⁶ For this church, see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 236-237.

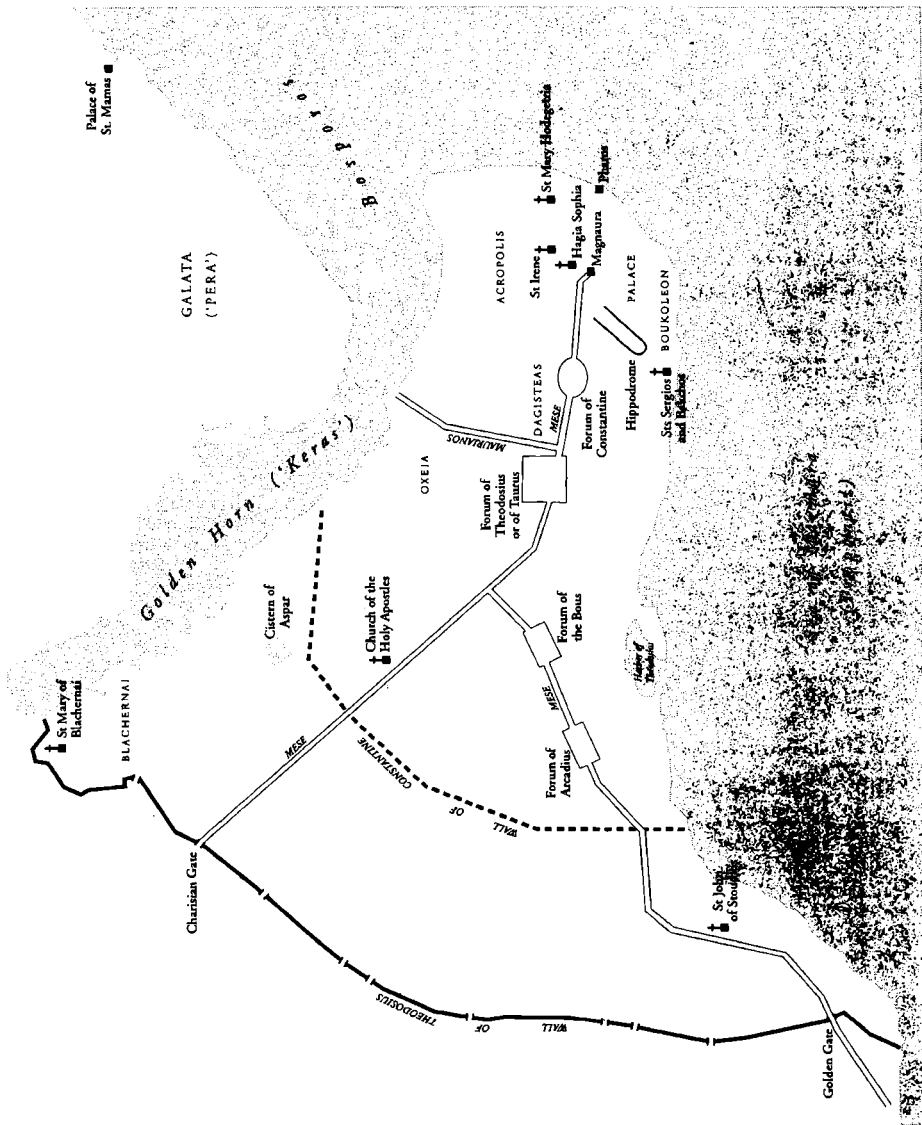
⁵¹⁷ An ironic end for one who could “hunt better than a centaur.” It is possible that he was assassinated (A. Vogt, ‘La jeunesse de Léon VI le Sage,’ pp. 426-428; B. Blysidou, *EM*, pp. 51-52). His son (?) Leo was possibly involved in the plot (C. Mango, ‘Eudocia Ingerina, The Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty,’ pp. 25-26, although several scholars have denied Leo’s complicity). Basil died on 29 August 886.

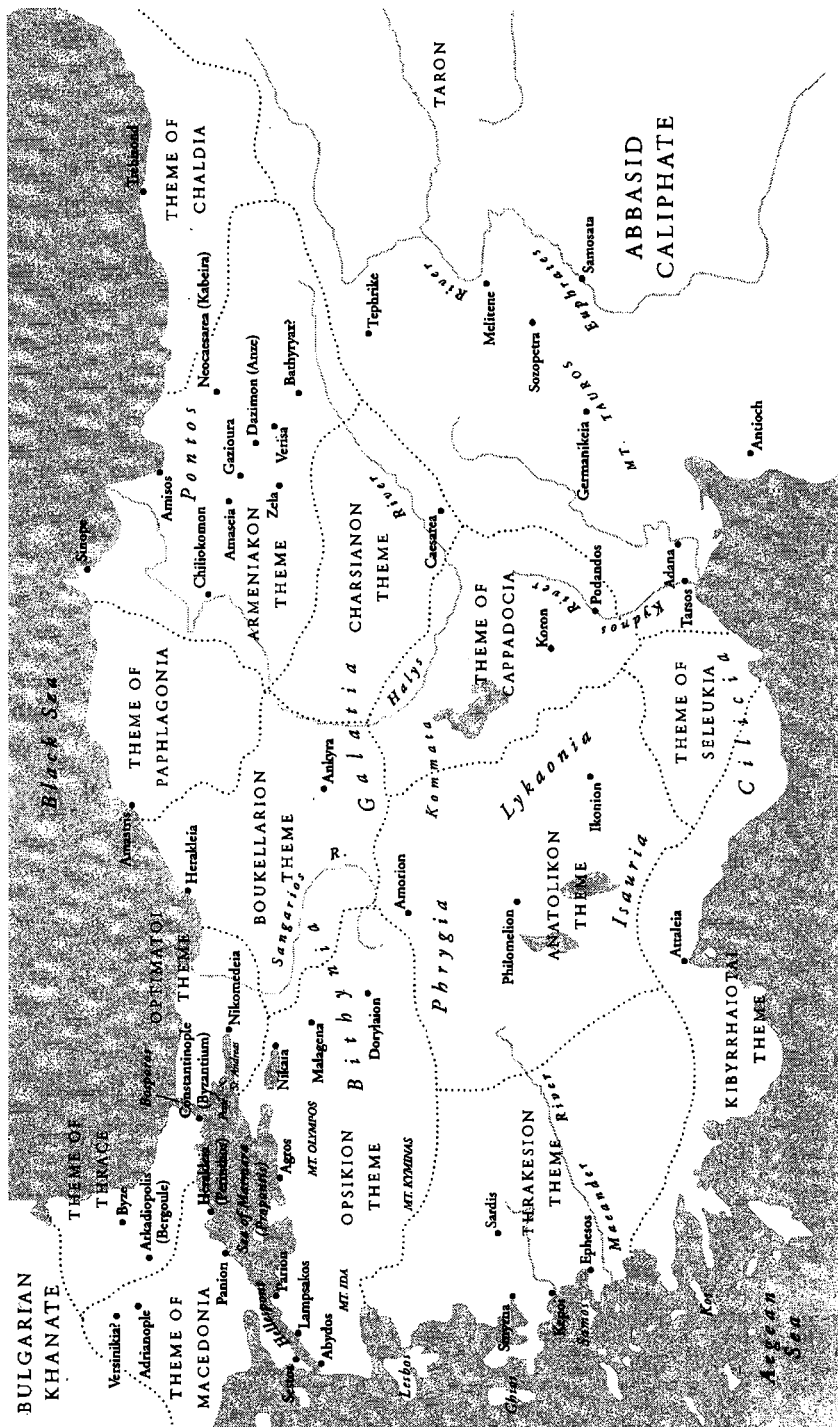
had reigned together with Michael for one year, and as sole Emperor he lived for nineteen years.

Patriarchs of Constantinople, 784-893

Tarasios	784-806
Nikephoros I	806-815
Theodotos I Kassiteras	815-821
Anthony I Kassimates	821-838
John VII the Grammarian	838-843 ⁵¹⁸
Methodios	843-847
Ignatios	847-858
Photios	858-867
Ignatios (again)	867-877
Photios (again)	877-886
Stephen I	886-893

⁵¹⁸ W. Treadgold ('The Chronological Accuracy of the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813-845,' pp. 178-179, *BR*, n. 406) has argued for 838 as the first year of John's Patriarchate. Other scholars still uphold the date of V. Grumel, 'Chronologie des patriarches iconoclastes du IX^e siècle,' January 837.





Glossary of Terms, Places, and Peoples

Acropolis: The acropolis of Byzantium comprised the northern part of the easternmost tip of the City (i.e., the region north of Hagia Sophia now occupied by the Ottoman Topkapi palace). The appellation dated from the days before the founding of Constantinople; cf. R. Janin, *CB*, pp. 286-287.

Agarenoi: The Arabs. The name comes from Hagar (cf. Genesis 16.1-16), the concubine of Abraham and mother of Ishmael, from whom the Arabs claimed descent; cf. V. Christides, 'The Names ΑΠΑΒΕΣ, ΣΑΡΑΚΗΝΟΙ etc. and Their False Byzantine Etymologies.'

Amalek: Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36.9-12). His descendants were later identified with an Arab tribe (for more details see W. Smith ed., *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, v. 1, p. 113; and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 1, p. 429). Genesios unambiguously calls Leo V an Armenian (1.6, 1.8, 1.24), and his father was named Bardas (2.4), clearly of Armenian origin (N. Adontz, *Études armeno-byzantines*, pp. 37-46; C. Toumanoff, 'Caucasia and Byzantium,' p. 151). Yet Genesios was perhaps influenced by a tradition that sought to ascribe an Arabic, or 'Syrian,' ancestry to Leo (cf. 1.8, 1.24; see D. Turner, 'The Origins and Accession of Leo V (813-820),' pp. 172-3).

Amorion: Amorion was the capital of the Anatolikon theme, and the home town of Michael II, giving its name to the dynasty he founded. It was destroyed by the Arabs in 838 and never really recovered; see K. Belke and M. Restle, *Galatien und Lykaonien* (= *TIB* v. 4), pp. 122-125.

Blachernai: The region comprising the northwestern corner of Constantinople. The Church of the Virgin that stood there, a fifth-century basilica, was the most famous of all the churches to her honor in that existed in the City. See R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 161-171.

Boukoleon: Lit. the "Bull-lion." Originally the name referred to a statue group of the two animals, but later designated a region of the city on the

shore of the Sea of Marmara, south of the Great Palace; see R. Guiland, *ETCB*, pp. 249-333.

Caliph: The Byzantine term was "Ameramnounē" (ἀμεραμνουνη), which derived from the Arabic for 'the prince of the faithful' (see E. A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, p. 125). Instead of inflicting it on the reader I have chosen to use the English equivalent.

Dazimon: This was where the Emperor Theophilos was defeated in battle by an Arab army in 838 (see Genesios Book 3 and 4.14). It lay in the Armeniakon theme, i.e., in the Pontos, about 65 miles south of Amisos on the coast of the Black Sea; cf. P. Wittek, 'Von der byzantinischen zur türkischen Toponymie,' p. 55; A. Bryer and D. Winfield, *BMTP*, pp. 8, 13; cf. Strabo 12.3.15.

Droungarios of the Arithmos/Vigla: This was the commander of the tagma (q.v.) of the Vigla (q.v.).

Eparchos of the City: This official (frequently translated as 'Prefect') was in charge of almost every aspect of life in Constantinople. His main function was to dispense justice, and ranked second only after the Emperor as a judge, but he also regulated economic transactions, maintained the peace, arranged ceremonies, etc.; see R. Guiland, 'L'Eparque'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, pp. 319-321.

Exkoubitoi: This was the second in rank of the mobile army units stationed near or in Constantinople called tagmata (q.v.). Their commander was called a Domestikos; see J. F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 228-235, 290-293.

Golden Gate: A monumental gate to the City at the south end of the land walls, built in the early fifth century and used for triumphal processions. It was built around a triumphal arch of Theodosios I and still stands, although it has been incorporated into a later Ottoman fort.

Iannis: In Jewish tradition, though not in the Old Testament itself, this was one of the Egyptian magicians that opposed Moses (cf. 2 Timothy 3.8, and note the depiction of John the Grammarian as a magician in Genesios 3.15 and 4.3). Otherwise it was a parody of the name John ('Ioannes' in Greek; see E. A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and*

Byzantine Periods, p. 589). For the iconodule use of this name to denigrate John the Grammarian see J. Gouillard, 'Art et littérature théologique à Byzance au lendemain de la querelle des images,' p. 4 ff.; A. Grabar, *L'Iconoclasme byzantin*, pp. 226-228.

Indiction: Diocletian and Constantine I devised a tax system in which fiscal exactions remained constant for the duration of fifteen years. In theory, reassessments were made at the end of each fifteen-year cycle. An indiction originally referred to the tax, but later to any year within each cycle, without, however, specifying which particular cycle. In the course of time, the indiction became the official method of dating events, even after the fifteen-year tax cycle had been abandoned; see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, pp. 61 ff., 448 ff.; V. Grumel, *La chronologie*, pp. 192-203.

Ishmaelites: The Arabs. The name comes from Ishmael, the son of Abraham and the handmaiden Hagar, from whom they claimed descent; cf. Genesis 16, 17, 21.

Kanikleios: This was the Emperor's inkpot, handled by an official called the Chartoularios of the Kanikleios (or just Kanikleios for short). He supervised the signing of Imperial orders; see F. Dölger, *Byzantinische Diplomatie*, pp. 50-65.

Kentenarion: A term derived from the Latin *centenarium*, signifying a group of one hundred. As a unit of weight it was equal to about 32 kg (one hundred late Roman and Byzantine 'pounds'); see G. Dagron and C. Morrisson, 'Le Kentenarion dans les sources byzantines.'

Lausiakos: This was a famous hall in the Great Palace, used for ceremonial and administrative purposes. Leo V administered justice there (Genesios 1.16), Theophilos had a theological discussion with the Graptoi (Theophanes Continuatus 104-105), and Bardas attacked Theoktistos (Genesios 4.9); see R. Guillard, 'Le Porte des Skyla,' pp. 76-86.

Logothetes of the Dromos: This official had diverse duties, including the protection of the Emperor, the organization of ceremonies and the Imperial post, and the supervision of diplomatic efforts. In the ninth century he was quite possibly the most important civil official; see D. A. Miller,

'The Logothete of the Drome in the Middle Byzantine Period'; R. Guiland, 'Les Logothètes,' pp. 31-70.

Magistros: A high ranking dignitary who advised the Emperor and had an important role in many Imperial ceremonies. There may have been more than one at a time and during the ninth century the title ceased to carry official duties and became a mere honorific title. It evolved from the Roman *magister*. A Protomagistros was the highest ranking of the Magistroi. See in general J. B. Bury, *IAS*, pp. 29-33; R. Guiland, 'L'ordre (τάξις) des Maîtres (τῶν μαγίστρων)'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 294.

Magnaaura: From Latin *magna aula*. This was ceremonial hall situated to the north of the palace; see R. Guiland, 'La Magnaure.'

Nomisma: This was the Byzantine name for the Latin *solidus*, a gold coin struck by Constantine I at 72 to the Byzantine pound (c. 320 g.). It was not debased in value for some seven hundred years. For its origins see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 439 f.

Opsikion theme: This theme lay in northwest Asia Minor. Its commander was called a 'komes,' i.e., 'count.' For its origins in the *obsequium* army of late antiquity and its subsequent history, see J. F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, esp. c. 2 and 3.

Papias: A eunuch in charge of the buildings of the palace, who had keys to the doors, directed teams of janitors, etc.; see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, pp. 126-7; R. Guiland, 'Le Concierge du Palais'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 306.

Patrikios: An honorary title bestowed upon high ranking commanders and civil functionaries. It carried no duties or official responsibilities and was not hereditary. It was etymologically descended from the Roman 'Patrician.'

Paulicians: The Paulicians were an Armenian religious sect whose adherents had been cruelly persecuted and driven from Byzantine lands by the Empress Theodora. They quickly established their own state on the Empire's eastern frontier, made an alliance with local Arab enemies of Byzantium, notably 'Umar, and participated in their annual raids into Byzantine territory. Their leader at that time was Karbeas, an ex-Byzantine soldier, and the capital of their state was Tephrike, just north of

Melitene; cf. Genesios 4.31 and 4.34; and a modern discussion in F. Hild and M. Restle, *Kappadokien* (= TIB v. 2), pp. 294-295. The Paulicians figure prominently in sections 4.31, 34-37 of Genesios. Opinions vary concerning their beliefs. Most scholars believe they were dualists, heirs of the Manicheans (S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, c. 3; P. Lemerle, 'Pauliciens'; the history of their relations with Byzantium can also be found in these works), but N. G. Garsoïan (*The Paulician Heresy*), with strong arguments, casts them as Adoptionists.

Pharos, Church of the Virgin: This church lay in the southern corner of the palace complex, near the sea. It took its name ('Lighthouse') from the palace lighthouse (which stood about 100 meters to the south); see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 232-236, supplemented by R. Jenkins and C. Mango, 'The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius.'

Phoiveratoi: Derived from the Roman *foederati* ('Federate troops'), this corps was the senior tourma (q.v.) of the Anatolikon theme (q.v.). Its Tourmarch was second-in-command of the theme, but for a brief period under Nikephoros I some of its troops may have been stationed in Constantinople; see J. F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 246-250.

Praepositoi: These were palace eunuchs, servants who mostly arranged ceremonies. Their proximity to the Emperor gave them a degree of influence; see R. Guiland, 'Le Préposite'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, p. 300.

Prote: One of the so-called Prince's Islands, in the Sea of Marmara; see R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins*, pp. 70-72; idem. *CB*, pp. 462-467.

Protomagistros: See 'Magistros' above.

Protostrator or Protostates: This official was the head of the Emperor's cavalry accompaniment. His role was mostly ceremonial; see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, pp. 117-118; R. Guiland, 'Le Protostrator'; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, pp. 337-338.

Quaestor: By the ninth century this was an Imperial official of medium rank with mostly judicial responsibilities, e.g., for drafting Imperial laws; see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, pp. 73-77; N. Oikonomidès, *LPB*, pp. 321-322.

Saracens: The Arabs. The origin of this name is controversial; see V. Christides, 'The Names APABEE, ΣΑΡΑΚΗΝΟΙ etc. and Their False Byzantine Etymologies.'

Scholai: This was the highest-ranking tagma (q.v.). Its commander was called a Domestikos; see J. F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 228-235, 282-290.

Skyla: The main western entrance to the palace, leading to and from the hippodrome (see R. Guiland, 'La Porte des Skyla'). For maps of the palace that indicate this area see A. Vogt, *Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, Le Livre des Cérémonies*, Commentaire, v. 1 = A. Guillou, *La civilisation byzantin*, pp. 292-295; R. Guiland, *ETCB*.

Stoudios, Church of John the Baptist: This was a famous monastery built in the fifth century in the southeastern corner of the City; see R. Janin, *EM*, pp. 430-440. Its monks wielded great influence over the Church and public opinion in the late-eighth and ninth centuries, as a result of their opposition to the policies of various Emperors, especially the iconoclasts. Most of the main structure of their monastery remains but it is in a terrible state of disrepair.

Strategos: This was the title of the military commander of a theme (q.v.), who was also responsible for many judicial matters. Strategoi were generally appointed for three or four years.

Tagma: The tagmata were mobile army units stationed near or in Constantinople, and were created and used in part to counterbalance the armies of the themes (q.v.) (especially the Opsikion theme) which lay under the direction of Strategoi (q.v.) who could not always be trusted. The commanders of most of the tagmata were called Domestikoi; see J. F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, esp. c. 4 and 5.

Theme: The word 'theme' referred to the military-administrative provinces of the Byzantine Empire *and* to the troops that were stationed in each of those provinces. Each theme was under the command of a Strategos (q.v.), who combined civil and military authority, or occasionally an equivalent general with a different title. Most of the soldiers in each theme were maintained by the proceeds of lands marked for that purpose. The

origin of the system is a highly controversial issue among scholars; for an approximate map of the themes in 842, see W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 336.

Tephrike: See 'Paulicians' above.

Tourma: A tourma was a subdivision of a theme (q.v.), and accordingly referred to both a geographical region and the troops stationed in it. Each tourma was under the command of a Tourmarch; for an approximate map of the tourmai in 842, see W. Treadgold, *BR*, p. 350.

Vigla: This was a tagma (q.v.) which protected the Emperor in Constantinople and on campaign. It was sometimes called the 'Arithmos'; for its origins and history, see J. B. Bury, *IAS*, pp. 60-62; J. F. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 236-245, 293-295.

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Abbreviations

BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CFHB	<i>Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae</i>
CSHB	<i>Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae</i>
DÖAW	<i>Denkschriften der österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse</i>
EEBS	Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐταιρεία Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν
FGrH	Felix Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , Berlin, 1923-.
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
LSJ	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , revised by H. S. Jones, Oxford, 1968.
PG	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca</i> , J. -P. Migne ed., Paris, 1844-.
TIB	<i>Tabula Imperii Byzantini</i> , ed. Herbert Hunger

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